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## A profusion of steel

Tim Hilton

DIANE WALDMAN:

Anthony Caro  
232pp. Phaidon. £50.  
0 7148 2248 9

Anthony Caro is the most distinguished living British artist, and yet the nature of his distinction is of a type that makes him rather a controversial figure. By common consent, he is a master. The artistic justice of his innovation is unquestioned. The beauty and inventiveness of his huge oeuvre that has followed his realization of the possibilities of abstract sculpture are plain for all to see. But Caro is not an artist who is, as it were, shared by all who have an interest in such matters. His art proclaims a set of artistic principles that separate him sharply from those who wish to see art, or indeed to make it, as an expression of the more general values of society. There is an Olympian aestheticism about Caro's sculpture: his commentators need to rise to its example.

Diane Waldman's monograph is a decent introduction to the sculpture, but it does not seem that she has been inspired by it. The point of the book is her photographic survey, which takes us from Caro's early training in the Royal Academy schools after the war to the bronze reliefs that were exhibited in London and New York last year. Mrs Waldman illustrates around 300 works in all, and has selected (as far as I can judge) those which best represent the artist. Such a survey is greatly useful, for many of the sculptures have had a rather fugitive circulation in reproduction, on private view cards and the like. A complete photographic record of all Caro's sculpture (in four volumes, compiled by Dieter Blume and published last year by the Galerie Wenzel, Cologne) exists but Mrs Waldman's book is handsomely illustrated for most purposes will be entirely serviceable.

Those purposes will not include the academic, for her bold approach has not the time for detail or nuance. Her text cannot be other than adventurous, for it attempts to explain and judge a body of work quite unlike any other in the history of sculpture. And she has risked the test of her sympathy with the artist by using a symmetrical format. To some, this kind of monograph may nowadays seem a little dull. But there is still

much to recommend it. The background and growth of understanding, the desire to be free, or to be bound to one's contemporaries, the realization of maturity, the sense of self and the sense of younger generations, above all the consonance of the art with the human personality of the man who fashioned it: who more than modern artists make us wonder about these matters, and what better method is there than the biographical to deal sensitively with them?

In Caro's case, biography seems the more justified because he has had a rather unlikely life for an artist: in the rhythm of it, in the attachments, but most of all in the choice of his medium. One can imagine a kind of painter coming from a stockbroker family, Charterhouse and Cambridge, but a revolutionary sculptor with that background is simply anomalous. More remarkable

than that, of course, is the way that Caro transformed his art at the age of forty, after many years of academic or relatively minor work. Mrs Waldman reproduces some of this early academicism alongside her description of the way that Caro began to feel the need for an art that would be more personal and direct. This period is obscure, and perhaps the impatience came gradually. But what we now recognize as the artist's typical abruptness, ambition and desire to seize things is revealed in the major step he took after his Royal Academy training. He knocked, unannounced, at Henry Moore's door and asked to work for him.

Caro was Moore's assistant for two full years between 1951 and 1953. It seems that it was not the older artist's work that was important to him. What mattered was his friendly conversation and his library. Caro

simply cannot be indicated, nor even hinted at, by being drawn.

Mrs Waldman could have made more of this. But her book is certainly informative about Caro's early years, and makes some convincing points. She is right to say that it was Caro's 'classical' temperament (by which she does not mean an academic one) that divided him from artists like Butler, Paolozzi and Turnbull, whose surrealism or artified angst was the up-to-date look in the mid-1950s. She is persuasive about Caro's vigorously modelled nodes of that time. Nonetheless, her account of his early teaching is wrongly balanced, and her description of what the artist calls his 'conversion' to radical abstraction is mechanical. These things may be more closely connected than we sometimes imagine.

Caro taught at St Martin's School of Art from 1953 onwards. He there led the revolution in modern sculpture that, so remarkably, was effected in a single department in one English art school. His influence at St Martin's, in popular belief, dates from 1960: from that time, that is, when he began constructing sculpture by welding. The nature of that influence is not absolutely germane to Mrs Waldman's book. But the matter of the teaching is crucial. I think it likely that the urgency of Caro's instruction reached a high point around 1959. It could be argued that the farmland of his teaching reflected his own difficulties: certainly the sculptors who then attended his classes believe that it was partly frustration that led him so to drive, good - and inspire - his pupils. The studio exercises and projects of the time (which Mrs Waldman has not attempted to reconstruct) are very moving. They lead the imagination to consider drawing, colour, mass, gravity, fantasy, representation, materials - and do so in a way that is utterly plastic and physical. When they were devised, these exercises were miles away from Henry Moore. They were also far in advance of any contemporary art, including Caro's own. They seem to have set out to attack the sculptural tradition (classical, rather, some might say) on all fronts: to see where it would break first. Yet they are also impersonal; in the sense that any student could have tried them, and made of them what was possible: it is as if Caro would

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## Gloriously ordinary

Paul Bailey

EUDORA WELTY:

*Losing Battles*  
436pp. Virago Press. £8.95.  
0 86068 285 9

The belated publication in Britain of this exceptionally beautiful novel, which first came out in the United States in 1970, is both welcome and timely, coming as it does so soon after the appearance here of its author's *Collected Stories*. These two books alone are evidence enough that Eudora Welty is a writer of considerable distinction.

"What I do in writing of any character is to try to enter into the mind, heart, and skin of a human being who is 'not myself', is how she accounts for her method of working. "Whether this happens to be a man or a woman, old or young, with skin black or white, the primary challenge lies in making the 'jump itself.' That 'jump' is achieved with a seeming lack of effort in *Losing Battles* as the various members of Granny Vaughn's copious family gather to celebrate the ninth old lady's nineteenth birthday. No sooner have they arrived at the farm in Banner, Mississippi, than they start talking, and in a manner that is immediately compelling. The majority of Granny's descendants and their spouses are natural raconteurs, in the best tradition of the Old South, and the great originality of *Losing Battles* derives from its being composed of the tales told by these people as they while away a long, hot Sunday in early August sometime in the 1930s – the work of fiction thus produced is at once a novel and a collection of short stories.

The dialogue invented by Eudora Welty in this kind and delicate book is often cunningly arbitrary. Conversational *cum-de-sac* are explored and then deserted. The Beechams and the Renfros repeat themselves constantly, but each repetition brings with it a variation or two, almost imperceptible. Such talk – varied, spontaneous, recognizably absurd – is a pleasure to read because it is always revealing of character. It is funny, too, but not in a wanton or gratuitous way. In the following example a cyclone is being discussed:

"I picked the Methodist Church up all in one piece and carried it through the air and set it down right next to the Baptist Church! Thank the Lord nobody was worshipping in either one," said Aunt Beck.

"I never heard of such a thing," said Mrs Moody.

"Now you have. And those Methodists had to tear their own church down sick by sick so they could carry it back and put it together again on the side of the road where it belonged," said Miss Beulah. "A good many Baptists helped 'em."

"I'll tell you something as contrary as people are. Cyclones," said Mr Renfro.

"It's a wonder we all wasn't carried off, killed with the horses and cows, and skinned alive like the chickens," said Uncle Curtis. "Just got up and found each other, glad we was all still in the land of the living."

At the heart of *Losing Battles* is the story, recounted by sundry characters, of Miss Julia Mortimer, the dedicated school teacher who has fought a losing battle against ignorance and illiteracy. Julia never

actually appears in the narrative because she dies shortly before the family reunion far from home, but her presence is felt throughout the novel. Welty displays remarkable skill as she resurrects this difficult woman through the voices of Julia's former students, only one of whom – Judge Moody – remembers her without resentment. Yet the more Granny's kin abuse the dead teacher, the more respect and admiration the reader feels for the object of their scorn. This is the triumph of an art that determinedly refuses to cast its own judgment, that registers – with an honourable disinterest – the judgments of the human beings it celebrates. Condemnation, it suggests, is practised by men and women, but not by novelists.

For Eudora Welty's art is, essentially, in accord with the complicated business of living. Like her beloved Chekhov, she excels in the big scenes – they are subjects for discussion; they happen off-stage. Even when her characters' tongues are venomous, her concerned detachment is informing the reader that there is more to the speakers than their temporary state of viciousness would indicate. The principal events of *Losing Battles* are of a trivial kind that is rare in the literature that has come out of the American South – there is no rape, and only a hint of possible, distant incest. The prevailing tone is one of glorious ordinariness, but one that never sinks into the terminally cute – *pace* Our Town, and the jottings of Faulkner, Saroyan and Vonnegut. The humanity that is everywhere demonstrated in *Losing Battles* does not coddle itself, but it does not invite approbation. It simply and necessarily informs what is probably the quietest masterpiece to be written in America since the death of Willa Cather.

perceptions drew chiefly on the classics of European fiction? When she produced her third work, a huge novel of life in nineteenth century Australia, it can hardly have seemed a promising subject to those who sought almost exclusively for freshness of perception and verbal ingenuity. And they would have been right: her language does have limitations, and she reads far better in the page and chapter than in the sentence or even paragraph – hence the difficulty of quoting from her novels. What she did achieve, as her advocates have always pointed out, was on intelligent, moving and truthful novel in the tradition of the great nineteenth century Russian and English realists.

The *Fortunes of Richard Mahony* has now been reissued in the three volumes in which it was originally published. It is misleading, however, to think of it as a trilogy. It is one novel whose parts cannot stand by themselves: the beginning of *Australia Felix* differs in almost all possible ways from the end of *Ullinn Thule*, but it is Richardson's purpose to show how one man moves from the wide-ranging social world of the first pages to the private tragic depths of the last, and in order to understand this fully none of the stages must be missed.

Richardson writes of her hero with an scrupulous but passionate attention. Richard Mahony is an Anglo-Irish gentleman who has qualified as a doctor in Edinburgh, and then, enticed by "the rose-water romance of the English press," has made his way to Australia to seek his fortune on the gold-fields. At the beginning of the novel we see him, some two years later, meeting and deciding to marry another English immigrant, a sixteen-year-old girl whom he loves devotedly, but whose temperament and beliefs differ profoundly from his own. The novel is largely the story of a solitary individual and of a marriage. For Mahony is a fastidious, ultra-sensitive man who prefers intellectual study to the easy-going sociability of his neighbours, who cannot share his wife's enthusiasm for Australia and the opportunities it offers, and whose craving for movement and fear of being spiritually

## See no evil

Margaret McHaffie

CHRISTA WOLF:

*The Quest for Christa T.*  
185pp. Virago Modern Classics.  
£2.95.  
0 86068 221 8

*A Model Childhood*  
407pp. Virago Press. £8.95.  
0 86068 253 6

*The Quest for Christa T.* (re-issued to coincide with the publication of Christa Wolf's more recent novel, *A Model Childhood*) anticipates many of the themes and preoccupations of the later work: the fallibility of memory and the compulsion to remember, the tension between fiction and fact, the struggle for a form commensurate with experience, writing as a means of self-definition and of understanding others. The first-person narrator traces Christa T's life from their first meeting in 1944 to her death in 1961, touching on her various roles as schoolgirl, friend, refugee, student, writer, teacher, married woman and mother. The narrator bridges the gaps in her memory by speculation and conjecture, by insights gained from the sometimes enigmatic papers left by the dead woman, by conversations, real and imagined, with others who have known her: "one cannot, unfortunately, cling to the facts, which are too mixed up with chance and don't tell us much... one has to invent, for the truth's sake." Christa T's experiences suggest with admirable economy the large-scale horrors of Nazi Germany and in the post-war world, initial euphoria and progressive disillusionment with the Communist slogans which superseded the Nazi ones. Yet for all its sombre aspects, and despite Christa T's early death, the novel is ultimately an affirmation of individual resilience in the face of evil and adversity. Christa T's moments of happiness, the solace which she finds in literature and in writing her poems, her craving to "see" and the affection she inspires, all indicate that her wish "simply to be a human being" is capable of at least a limited fulfilment.

More than twice as long as its predecessor, *A Model Childhood* is also more complex, more explicit and bleaker in tone. The genesis of the novel is part of its subject matter: the writer sits at her typewriter in November 1972 and reports her uncertainties about a starting point. Compelled by her "research" visit with her husband, brother and teenage daughter to "L. now Polish G." to the summer of 1971, she embarks on a reconstruction of the past. It is the town in which she spent her childhood and which she last saw in 1945, when she and her family fled from the advancing Russian armies. Throughout the novel she struggles to answer the "insistent question": "How did we become what we are today?"

The attempt at an answer involves her in "a game in and with the second person and the third person, for the purpose of their fusion." It is a difficult and desperate game, in which the narrator refers to herself as "you" and to the child she once was as "Nelly," using a technique which substitutes for linear narrative an intricate web woven from strands of the present in which she is writing, the recent past of the visit to her home town and the remoter past of Nelly's childhood in Nazi Germany. The strands are inseparable. The adult's reactions to the last throes of the war in Vietnam and the carnage in Chile blend with the child's experience of burning synagogues and ruined cities, to show a woman torn and haunted by recurrent cruelty, inhumanity and danger.

Thomas Mann is one of many writers alluded to in both novels, though his influence is most clearly discernible in *A Model Childhood*. The mention of Mann and the Magician in *The Quest for Christa T.* and the narrator and her daughter points to the unlikely, to the brilliant depiction of Nelly's confirmation party, where the photographer

Andrack re-enacts the role of Mann's sinister Cipolla. Like Mann, Christa Wolf uses the performance of the magician/hypnotist as a metaphor for the way in which Fascism enslaves the minds of its willing victims, and breaks the resistance of the less willing. But there is one chilling difference. The deluded Mario, when roused from his delusion, shoots the man who has lulled him into mistaking ugliness for beauty. Nelly's cousin Astrid, after performing tricks which her relatives find embarrassing and distasteful, trains what she believes to be a rifle not at her manipulator, but at the heart of her disapproving Uncle Walter. Thomas Mann wrote *Mario and the Magician* in 1929 as a warning to his fellow countrymen of the corrupting effects of Fascism already evident in Italy, and ends his story with the downfall of the dictator figure. Christa Wolf, writing between 1972 and 1975, ends her account of Andrack's performance with an example of how his destructive power can be stronger than the ties of natural affection, and there is no hint of his coming to grief. It is an ominous change of emphasis which suggests that delusion can persist and recur, and also that it cannot be dramatically ended with the death of a dictator.

This is a disquieting novel, not least in its revelation of how easy it was to hoodwink many ordinary people about the nature of the Nazi regime. The narrator depicts the insidious advance of Nazism among the innocents of the 1930s, the naïveté with which often decent people succumbed to the appeal of romanticized brutality, the lure of banners, songs and emotional rallies. Nelly's father, the grocer Bruno Jordani, who joins the Nazi party in 1933, has at first no real idea of what he has involved himself in. This is evident in his assumption that he can continue his amiable habit of extending credit to the wives of known Communists until he is intimidated and blackmailed by the odious Standartenführer Arndt. The narrator is not sure how far this experience of fear and small-scale corruption opened Bruno Jordani's eyes to the ugliness of Nazism; she cannot answer with any certainty the question how much Nelly's parents knew or half-knew. She cannot understand how they could not know, though she understands very well the pressures of fear which kept them publicly silent. Nelly is only three years old when the narrator introduces her and so the young to comprehend adult preoccupations. As she grows older, she displays few qualms at what is happening (she first hears the term "concentration camp" when she is seven and has no very clear idea what it means). Whatever uneasiness she may feel at her parents' half-understood comments on the contents of the local newspaper is offset by the influence of an adored teacher and the school in which she is taught about racial purity and the Jewish menace. It is not until her teens, when she experiences the presence of the Russian victors after the flight westwards, that she begins to question what she has been taught and to feel the stirrings of the guilt which still haunts the narrator.

*A Model Childhood* is remarkable for the honesty and courage with which it carries on the truth about the struggle to arrive at the truth about the past. The tentativeness of the novel's beginning is matched by the inconclusiveness of its end: "His memory does its duty? Or has it proven – by the act of misleading – that it's impossible to escape the mortal sin of our time: the desire not to come to grips with oneself?"

Christa Wolf has been well served by the translators of both novels, but it is a pity that the chapter headings of the German original have been omitted from *A Model Childhood*. Franz Kafka: *An Anthology of Modern Literature*, edited and translated by Kenneth Hughes (200pp. University Press of New England. Distributed by Corgi Ltd, Ely House, 30 Abchurch Lane, London W1. £14. 0 8451 286 9), contains nineteen essays among them contributions from Hannah Arendt, Eduard Goldschmidt and Helmut Richter.

## The citizen composer

Gerald Abraham

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS (Editor):

*Shostakovich: The Man and his Music*  
233pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £12.50.  
0 85315 502 X

ERIC ROSEBERRY:

*Shostakovich: His Life and Times*  
191pp. Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books. £8.50.  
0 85936 144 6

"For the artist to become 'a legend in his lifetime' is at best an ambiguous blessing, and at worst a painful test of creative endurance," says Christopher Norris in his Introduction to *Shostakovich: The Man and his Music*.

Shostakovich was thrust into public prominence from the outset of his career, achieving the kind of representative status, as Soviet citizen-composer, which made his every word and utterance a topic of intense debate.

A little exaggerated, perhaps, but Shostakovich early on found himself in a situation which a strong character would have found unenviable, and which must have been almost intolerable for a nervous, myopic person – and no composer in history had been so subject to violent and arbitrary changes of artistic policy dictated by a despotic government. It is a high tribute to Shostakovich that he managed to produce masterpieces amid the near-rubbish, besides gaining exculpation from the charge that he lacked the power of self-criticism. His public situation meant that his works and personality have provided rich fields for outside criticism, informed and uninformed. Both figure in this book.

"It begins with its best-informed chapter, fascinating pieces on the first eleven string quartets by Christy Rowland and on the last four by Alan George, leader and violoncello of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet which introduced the last quartets in this country and had the privilege of being coached by the composer. He was both kind and touchingly modest, and we have here a small-scale equivalent of what Weinberger might have written in *His Kauschke für Auführungen klassischer Symphonien* if he had been able to talk to Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann. George ends:

In relating our experience of studying, learning, and performing these works, together with ideas and feelings gained from an acquaintance with other music relevant to this topic, we have attempted to show how a feasible concept of what the composer desired to communicate can be proposed to receptive ears and hearts. It says much for the quality of these compositions that many of the points discussed can equally apply to the music of other composers.

From description of music from the inside we are brought down to description from the outside. Robert Dearing's chapter on "The First Twelve Symphonies: portrait of the artist as citizen-composer" (the last three are covered in a later chapter) is largely programme-note territory, by passages like the one describing "exaggerated posturing" in the Third Symphony: "Such strident attitudes are doomed, and their collapse is vividly portrayed in a remarkably plethoric passage of writhing brass over a dense bed of percussion." And Dearing gets things wrong. The Second Symphony is not an early example of "Socialist realism". Gorky's phrase was not adopted until five years later, when it was a hybrid with a strong element of *Proletkult* in the choral canon. But he is more right than he knows when he speculates that the huge first *Largo* of the Sixth Symphony is a survival from a planned symphony had first to Lenin. Shostakovich had first contemplated a chorale in memory of Lenin as early as 1924 and in the late 1930s he had accumulated a great deal of

musical material for the first two movements, only to be blocked by inability to introduce Mayakovsky's Lenin poems. However, according to A. Sokhor, the Lenin material was used in the first movement of the Sixth Symphony and the first-movement exposition of the Seventh.

The chapter on Shostakovich's piano music – surprisingly small in quantity and mediocre in quality considering his distinction as a pianist – is contributed by another pianist-composer, Ronald Stevenson, whose own *Paschnagla* on *DSCH* is described by a fellow-contributor as "one of the few masterpieces for the piano of this century". Stevenson plays the piano better than he writes, for his contribution is badly organized. He devotes six pages to Shostakovich's personality and appearance ("His complexion had a pallor and the plaster mask of the secular saint cracked in the grin of a gargoyles") and to Anton Rubinstein and other Russian virtuosi before getting down to his subject – and then he rushes off into digressions on the now forgotten Leo Ornstein and Henry Cowell. An attempt to place Shostakovich's compositions in the context of Soviet piano music in general would have been more helpful.

The editor's namesake Geoffrey Norris has supplied a chapter on the operas which is one of the best in the book, despite the limited area of his subject. Shostakovich completed only two out of the considerable number he contemplated, the early *The Nose*, derived from Gogol, and the original and revised versions of *The Lady Mouchel of the Mzensk District*. (Why did the editor not think of a chapter on the ballets?) Norris is a scholar and gives his references properly. Moreover he and Malcolm MacDonald appear to be the only contributors who can read Russian: there is a pathetic reliance on Rubinstein for biographical information because his book was translated in 1959, and one writer refers to him as "the major Soviet biographer". Norris gives the most thorough account I know of *The Nose* and does full justice to Katerina's music in *Lady Mouchel*. Comparing the two versions of the latter, he mentions among other details that when the men are mauling the maid Aksinya at the beginning of Scene 2, the mention of her "tears" – just the sort of "vulgarity" that Stalin and Pymov objected to – was altered to "shoulders" in 1962. He rightly gives only a passing mention to the three-

act musical comedy, *Maskva, Cherevinski*, incredible rubbish composed in 1958 just after the Eleventh Symphony.

Malcolm MacDonald takes up the tale of his chapter on "Words and Music in Late Shostakovich" which includes a penetrating examination of the Yevushenko settings, the Thirteenth Symphony, and *The Execution of Stepan Razin*.

Shostakovich's word-setting, both here [in the Symphony] and later, rejects mere lyrical appeal: it is austere, usually syllabic, responding to the natural speech-inflections with repeated notes or conjunct motion – at most slightly widening its range and broadening into *enlaid* phrases for emotional heightening. Certainly it gains thereby a noble simplicity that sometimes brings it close to folksong. But it also limits the role of the vocal lines, enhancing their importance purely as carriers of information, as transmitters of the text: throughout these late vocal works, Shostakovich is at pains to make every word clearly audible, so that the contrast between the restraint of the voice parts and (at first) the prodigality of instrumental invention often clearly implies a counterpoint of ideas. The listener becomes aware of both correspondences and discrepancies.

The "instrumental invention" nearly dries up in the last two vocal works, the *Suite on Verses by Michelangelo* (translated by A. Efros) and the *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin* (a character in Dostoevsky's *The Demons*, on which Shostakovich once thought of basing an opera), and the "restraint of the voice parts" is carried to the limit. Yet the *Idylls for Strings* – the last of which borrows its theme from a boyish opera based on Pushkin: politics and musical language" (not musical style) (Christopher Norris). After this chapter the editorial policy changes. Instead of further examinations of specific areas – the concertos, the chamber music with piano, the ballets – or an overall study of the evolution of Shostakovich's musical style, we are given general chapters entailing considerable overlap on "Shostakovich and the British Composer" (Bernard Stevens), "Shostakovich: politics and musical language" (not musical style) (Christopher Norris) and "Shostakovich and the Soviet System, 1925-1975" (Robert Strakosky), ending with a short dictionary-style article by Alan Bush which might have been better placed at the



Emmanuel Chabrier: a drawing made by Dutilleul in 1873 and reproduced in Emmanuel Chabrier by Roger Delage, an illustrated memoir in French and English of the composer (214pp. with 183 plates. Paris: Minkoff et Laitis. 2 8266 0638 7).

beginning. The best of these is that by Bernard Stevens, who admits that apart from Britten, there are few examples of the direct stylistic influence of Shostakovich on the work of English composers. But Stevens himself is a very respectable English composer and, while he does not admit any personal influence from Shostakovich's style, he makes a good many pertinent remarks about it.

No book about Shostakovich can avoid the problem of Solomon Volkov's *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitry Shostakovich*. When I reviewed it (17.5. November 23, 1979) I observed that the self-portrait was "consistent with my own superficial impression of him and with what I have been told by his Russian and other East European colleagues" and I have recently been allowed to see Boris Schwarz's account of an interview with Maksim Shostakovich who had denounced the book. Now it seems that he "does not question the authenticity of the facts, but he is well aware of the words put into his father's mouth", and of course the "words" have come to us only in a

rather poor translation. The conductor Kirill Kondrashin has wholeheartedly endorsed the book and I have been privately informed through a reliable source in the Soviet Union that it is indeed genuine. But Christopher Norris never misses a chance in his editorial Introduction and his chapter on politics and musical language to denigrate "Volkov's... well-oiled machinery of slanted reconstruction". Eric Roseberry accepts Volkov, though with one or two cautionary qualifications. His book has the advantage of a single author, the advantage of being planned for a "life and times" series. The result is essentially a picture-book, the pictures not particularly well chosen or reproduced (there is no scene from *Lady Mouchel* or any of the ballets, for example), the text straightforward biography (good on the background) with sensible if rather superficial comment on the works. We are a third of the way through the book before we reach the First Symphony. Roseberry has shown in a doctoral thesis that he is well equipped to write a penetrating book on Shostakovich's musical style, but this is not it.

## Modern maestros

Paul Driver

MEIRTON BOWEN:

*Michael Tippett*  
196pp. Robson Books. £7.95.  
0 86051 137 5

PAUL GRIFFITHS:

*Peter Maxwell Davies*  
196pp. Robson Books. £7.95.  
0 86051 138 3

These are the first two volumes in a series from Robson entitled "The Contemporary Composers", edited by Nicholas Snowman, who provides a preface lightly deploring the state of the dissemination of contemporary music in Europe and America, and suggesting that his series of books (*Birtwistle and Berio* are on the way) might unenthusiastically supplement the work of the few independently-minded musical pathfinders who do exist. He also, more accurately, claims that the books will be useful concert guides for listeners who stumble on a new piece of music and wish to learn the essential facts about its composer.

Both Maxwell Davies and Tippett should serve this purpose very adequately. They are writers of well-known newspaper criticism to extremely low level style and contain a store of information that is easily grasped and accumulated a great deal of

the plethora of appended documentation – bibliographies, discographies, work-lists, glossaries and interviews. In Maxwell Davies there is a long section containing the composer's own notes and articles on his music and the interview here is of considerable substance and scope: it can be taken as the definitive one to date. The Tippett interview is acknowledged to be a cento cobbled from previously published statements: it is disappointingly short, but it does contain the entire text of an article he wrote on Shostakovich's *Testimony*. Neither book is oppressively technical, though Griffiths's, in the nature of its subject, attempts more thoroughgoing analysis. Each book includes many photographs and music-examples; concerning the latter, Robson's otherwise strict standards of production seem to have been relaxed: they are printed in every conceivable size and typeface (often illegibly) in Bowen's book, and are not numbered in Griffiths's.

Bowen's book succeeds particularly well in conveying passion for Tippett's music which does not exclude relevant criticism. I agree with nearly all his value-judgments as to the over-ambitiousness of the finale of the First String Quartet, the gauche charm of the *Panthea* on a Theme of Handel), the hasty compromise of the Concerto for Orchestra (due, we now learn, to illness when the work had to be finished for the 1963 Edinburgh Festival), the embarrassing miscalculation and self-hindrance of the

opera, *The Ice Break*, the greatness of *The Vision of Saint Augustine*. He is right when discussing the Double Concerto for Strings and the Second String Quartet to remind us how "for a composer who had to struggle so hard to produce anything equal to his ambitions, these compositions sound amazingly effortless", and of Tippett's astonishing achievement "in turning himself into a front-rank composer during his middle thirties". But Bowen ignores a valuable ingredient of Tippett's sensibility when slighting occasional pieces like the "Prince Charles Suite" and the "Divertimento on 'Selling the Round'", whose "sense of miscellany" is all their point and charm.

There are chunky discussions of the operas and symphonies and a whole chapter on *A Child of Our Time*, a work which does not perhaps deserve the amount of attention it invariably attracts. Tippett's abiding artistic concerns and visionary development are perceptively dealt with and his personality is compellingly evoked. For a cameo of Tippett's young eccentric, these sentences would be hard to match. "The money his parents gave him to buy clothes he saved for his own devices. An interfering aunt made him buy a bowler hat, cane and gloves, but he threw these into the sea at Marseilles. At the same time he abandoned God, he took to marmalade, having discovered its restorative powers."

Although Griffiths's study of Maxwell Davies begins according to the format of the series with a chapter of biography, he is inclined to observe a more respectful and uncritical distance from his composer. Very few critical or aesthetic points are ventured; description and a somewhat dutiful analytic scrutiny occupy most of the space. The book is in fact highly flattering to Maxwell Davies, presenting him exclusively in his own terms. While this is quite a different one does miss a minimal application of context – for example key figures like Birtwistle, Goehr and Britten (above all) go practically unmentioned. Any writer on Davies has to sift through an oeuvre of almost unmanageable proportions. In a short book a comprehensive treatment is bound to be summary and it must be said that Griffiths's summary fashion is a brilliant one. His crisp accounts leave little room for disagreement and the breadth of his knowledge is always impressive. He has laid out his contents in four chapters of broad survey and three "Interludes" subtitled the String Quartet, *Antichrist* and *Ave Maria Sella* to close, penetrating analysis. The book inevitably peters out because its last chapter, "Paradoxicalists", reflecting Davies's vastly increased rate of production since he moved north in 1970, has to deal with more music than the other three put together. But this is the first book to be published on Maxwell Davies and will unquestionably be useful to musicians.

## Gold-digging

Karen McLeod

HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON:

*The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*  
Volume 1 *Australia Felix*  
0 14 00 3338 6  
Volume 2 *The Way Home*  
0 14 00 3339 4  
Volume 3 *Ullinn Thule*  
0 14 00 3340 8  
Penguin. £1.95 each.

There are – or were – two versions of the map of English fiction in the first thirty years of this century. The earlier one, which continued to be used by reviewers well into the 1930s, acknowledged *The Old Wives' Tale* as the highest peak, marked in moch of Wells and some Galsworthy, paid immense but uneasy respects to Conrad, and was generous to some lesser writers, among whom was D. H. Lawrence. A second map, originally based on a survey by Virginia Woolf, superseded the earlier one, and made a point of distinguishing those novels in which linguistic and technical experiment sustains the fictions. Lawrence and Joyce (and again, Conrad) dominate the mountain ranges in this map, although "Virginia Woolf has her own chain of summits and is flanked by Dorothy Richardson, Bennett and Wells are reduced to mere undulations in the landscape. Both maps, it we know, are distortions: inevitably some good minor writers have been inadequately recorded, and at least one major writer has been omitted altogether: Henry Handel Richardson.

Richardson (she added a male pseudonym to her own surname) has always had her passionate admirers, but even at the height of her fame in 1920 after the publication of the third volume of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, she made little impact on the literary establishment, especially the modernist establishment. And why indeed should they have concerned themselves with this woman who had an Australian upbringing and a German education, who lived the life of a near-recluse and whose sympathies and moral

Richardson writes of her hero with an scrupulous but passionate attention. Richard Mahony is an Anglo-Irish gentleman who has qualified as a doctor in Edinburgh, and then, enticed by "the rose-water romance of the English press," has made his way to Australia to seek his fortune on the gold-fields. At the beginning of the novel we see him, some two years later, meeting and deciding to marry another English immigrant, a sixteen-year-old girl whom he loves devotedly, but whose temperament and beliefs differ profoundly from his own. The novel is largely the story of a solitary individual and of a marriage. For Mahony is a fastidious, ultra-sensitive man who prefers intellectual study to the easy-going sociability of his neighbours, who cannot share his wife's enthusiasm for Australia and the opportunities it offers, and whose craving for movement and fear of being spiritually

*The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* is very different from Richardson's first novel, the obscure *Maïre Quest*; and from her second, the critical study of adolescence called *The Gelling of Wisdom*. What is common to them is an imaginative understanding of very different sorts of people, and a belief that the truth can never be simple but must be told. Such qualities will not necessarily make a work fashionable, but they are important in judging its status as literature.

Thomas Mann is one of many writers alluded to in both novels, though his influence is most clearly discernible in *A Model Childhood*. The mention of Mann and the Magician in *The Quest for Christa T.* and the narrator and her daughter points to the unlikely, to the brilliant depiction of Nelly's confirmation party, where the photographer

Andrack re-enacts the role of Mann's sinister Cipolla. Like Mann, Christa Wolf uses the performance of the magician/hypnotist as a metaphor for the way in which Fascism enslaves the minds of its willing victims, and breaks the resistance of the less willing. But there is one chilling difference. The deluded Mario, when roused from his delusion, shoots the man who has lulled him into mistaking ugliness for beauty. Nelly's cousin Astrid, after performing tricks which her relatives find embarrassing and distasteful, trains what she believes to be a rifle not at her manipulator, but at the heart of her disapproving Uncle Walter. Thomas Mann wrote *Mario and the Magician* in 1929 as a warning to his fellow countrymen of the corrupting effects of Fascism already evident in Italy, and ends his story with the downfall of the dictator figure. Christa Wolf, writing between 1972 and 1975, ends her account of Andrack's performance with an example of how his destructive power can be stronger than the ties of natural affection, and there is no hint of his coming to grief. It is an ominous change of emphasis which suggests that delusion can persist and recur, and also that it cannot be dramatically ended with the death of a dictator.

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## Jonathan Cape

## commentary

### Scottish loyalty and sacrifice

**Douglas Dunn**

Clydebutit

7.84 Scotland at the Mitchell Theatre, Glasgow and on tour

7.84 Scotland's revival of five plays dealing with Scottish working-class issues and characters is more than an archaeological exercise underlining the dispiriting sameness of then and now. It asserts the continuity between 7.84's zestful, committed and vigorously inventive style and the concerns of earlier Glasgow-based companies whose loyalties were firmly left-wing, radical and excitingly of their times. Playgoers in the west of Scotland had apparently noticed a similarity between 7.84 Scotland, the old Glasgow Workers Theatre Group and the Glasgow Unity Players. GWTG was a phenomenon the 1930s, in all likelihood hardened by the cultural traditions of the Scottish working-class movement stretching back to the Mechanics Institutes and other self-help groups. It grew out of the St George Players which had already performed plays by O'Neill, Theodore Dreiser and Elmer Rice. Founded in 1937, the GWTG not unpredictably put on Clifford Odets's *Waiting for Lefty* as well as Harry Trott's vivid piece of agitprop *UAB Scotland* which 7.84 revive on a double-bill with Ewan MacColl's *Johnny Noble*. Two other plays in the season come from the stock of the Glasgow Unity Players, *Gold in his Boots* by George Munro and *Men Should Weep*, both first performed in 1947. From further back, 7.84 also retrieve Joe Corrie's *In Time of Strife* (1927).

Intriguingly, *Clydebutit*, the blanket title for the series, puts forward the interesting notion that a large slice of recent Scottish drama has simply been neglected. In a foreword to the season's souvenir programme, John McGrath lays much of the blame for this forgetfulness on the unfortunate James Bridie. 'It should be a cause for concern,' he writes, 'that Bridie should be regarded as "THE Scottish playwright of the 40s and 50s" — by virtue of playing to largely middle-class audiences. The works of Joe Corrie, and the Undly plays, are "not remembered". That means that they ARE remembered, but by the "wrong" people.'

It seems a pity that Bridie should be chastised with the meanness of his prim and pallid audience. As much as anyone, he knew that the cultural ills of Scotland are more accurately traced to a pious and feckless public, less to its artists and writers. Admittedly, though, the assumption existed that the Scottish theatre had, until recently, been disgracefully ill-served by literary talent, while writers went miserably without encouragement from the Scottish theatre. That is no longer the case, but a virtue of 7.84's recent season is that it portrays how the Scottish theatre could have been much more productive, pertinent and lively had an important drive in its tradition not been allowed to peter out, surviving for too long only in the memories of the elderly, their anecdotes and reminiscences now largely vindicated.

*Gold in his Boots* dramatizes the old Scottish calamity of success as an invitation to ruin. In this case, the success is produced by footballing talent, which like the ability to box, takes on peculiarly close to a Scots myth, that of the 'lad o' pairts' whose efforts to make something of himself turn out to be a curse. Indeed, George Munro's play strikes me as an invention of the *Sunday Post* with sentimental folkiness stripped away, a hurtful dose of 'The Broons' comic strip. Jonathan Watson plays the young footballer with a perspective blend of jauntyness and conscientious self-defence. Opening with a leisurely and convincing first act, *Gold in his Boots* soon proves that its author had bitten off more

than he could chew. By the second act events are beginning to go by in a rush: it is as if Munro, newspaperman that he was, had realized that his deadline was creeping up on him. Yet if the play's haste in the second act fights against John McGrath's direction and the spirited performances of the cast, the impression it leaves is far from disagreeable. Here is the kind of realism with which Scottish dramatists should have persevered through the 1950s and 1960s. With some dexterity, much conviction, and the proof of inside knowledge, Munro moves from vivid scenes of family drama (the best thing in the play) to sporting and journalistic corruption, religious bigotry of a casually distressing kind, and changing-room scenes. The end result is a graphic if flawed depiction of how a working-class lad's talent for a game (or anything else) can turn out to be worse than a mixed blessing.

Most of these plays have family life as a common theme, if only because loyalties and sacrifice loomed large in their authors' minds. Even a stylized ballad-play like *Johnny Noble* makes it clear that it is as much concerned with the life of a community, with shared destinies, as realistic dramas such as *In Time of Strife* and *Men Should Weep*. Joe Corrie was a miner himself and knew what he was writing about in his portrayal of family tensions during the General Strike. Even so, one would have expected a writer of Corrie's natural gifts to have resisted the Scottish penchant for pawkly humour in a play otherwise penetrating in its rejection of defeatism and its reach into authentically tragic situations. Arguments could be made for swift patter being the Scottish worker's verbal survival-kit, his so-called resilience. But it can also come across as mindless banter, like jokes at a funeral, which writers more intellectually astringent might have sought to criticize. There is, too, a lingering suspicion of it being there to sweeten the pill with the sort of dialogue which Scottish audiences are guilelessly prone to approve, spicing graphic ardour with antierational more than rounding out a balanced view of life. Given the nostalgic habits of Scots in general (not just those who go to the theatre) that automatically piloted, scarcely adifying 'humour' delights the ears of the gerontocracy, whether in age or in spirit; it perpetuates a self-satisfied, self-defeatingly complacent revel in suffering, an attitude of 'If the worst comes to the worst, we can always laugh at it'. It is a limitation that at times seems inbuilt in the Scots mind (Clydebutit, if you like) and no play in 7.84's season does anything or says anything to show it up for what it is, the enjoyment of a low horizon.

That, too, is a flaw in Gilles Haveragat's visually arresting interpretation of *Men Should Weep*. At least one character stoops to the old Glasgow comic's trick of a humorous mispronunciation — 'usually' — a habit, which, if less common in Glasgow than it was, is none the less condoned when reproduced on the stage, and indicative, perhaps, of a writer being a shade too high above her material. In spite of it, though, the play's impact is forceful and compassionate. Set in a Glasgow plosra the anguish and fatigue of the face of her husband's unemployment (a topical spectre in all five plays), her youngest son's illness, another son's incompetent marriage, her daughter-in-law's frustrated sexuality, her daughter's opting for a life of glamour while remaining faithful to her origins. Jazz music in the background — late 1920s — Duke Ellington and Beanie Smith — provides a secondary if understated comment on deprivation, although it is the time was leading to them. In American movie and plays — *Dead End*, perhaps — the family, the

micro worship and macho attractions of gangsterdom (interestingly, the only law-breaking in *Men Should Weep* is pilfering and purse-snatching) — *Street Scene*, the ambience of Elmer Rice and Clifford Odets, and something of the shut-in atmosphere of O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* with a similar sense of being outside time in a backwater of misfortune, humiliation and unhappiness. Very little British let alone Scottish drama comes to mind in thinking about the pedigree of *Men Should Weep*. That, too, emphasizes the vitality and social acuity that were lost through the neglect of that side of the Scottish theatre's achievement in the hands of the Glasgow Unity Players. It might mean little to the British stage as a whole (curiously disrespectful of Scottishness as it is) but the loss of these densely populated, characterful plays dug a large hole in Scotland, which for years was without a truthful dramatic image of itself.

*UAB Scotland* (UAB stands for Unemployment Assistance Board) and *Johnny Noble* I saw in a church hall in Perth. Put on during the STUC's conference, they drew an audience largely of trades union delegates. Inevitably, it was an evening of preaching to the converted, although touches of genuine inspiration in Harry Trott's 'living newspaper' did not go unnoticed, and neither did moments of poetry, or the boisterous simplicity and verve of *Johnny Noble*. A love story set in the 1930s and early 1940s, *Johnny Noble* includes a timeless ballad-like theme of a journey of self-discovery and a search for work as well as a knowledge of what the world is like. It has the strange effect of taking standard working-class problems back to their folk roots. Both these short plays are good, expressive theatre, but as church hall they are magnificent, rousing active pieces.

7.84 Scotland will perform *Men Should Weep* during the Edinburgh Festival at the Church Hill Theatre, Edinburgh, August 16-August 21, and August 23-September 11 at the Moray House Theatre, Edinburgh, then at the Dundee Repertory Theatre, September 14-18. *Johnny Noble* will be performed at 3pm at the Moray House Theatre, August 25-September 4. In *Time of Strife* will be toured in Edinburgh and Fife during January-February 1983.

## Carefully blurred

**Jonathan Keates**

Last Chronicle  
Cottesloe Theatre

The modern mania for reviving everything that can possibly be revived, rather as if we were afraid that culture was suddenly going to disappear altogether, has no doubt succeeded in somewhere reasserting Trollope's two plays. The lurid verse drama called *The Noble Jilt*, and *Did He Steal It?* — a dramatization of the main plot of *The Last Chronicle of Barset* — may by now have featured as tailpieces at some Trollope junky by an American university or college dramatic society. At the Cottesloe, where they are more chary of their public, we are given instead the writer himself in a platform digest of the *Autobiography*.

It requires a certain imaginative confidence to conceive of Trollope's life as having anything very much in it that will grab audiences in a generation reared in the belief that Victorians are only interesting when being morbid, psychotic or depraved. A balding, middle-aged, happily-married post office functionary, with misguided political ambitions, an unquenchable enthusiasm for hunting and an obsessive habit of producing a daily quota of written words before breakfast is an unimpressive figure to bring on to the Cottesloe stage, but Michael McCafferty's entertainment succeeds, at least partially, in conveying something of Trollope's compelling humanity, so doggedly extended and explored in the novels.

No attempt has, alas, been made to lensed, played, or flossy-bearded Trollope, more aggressively masking sensibility, we are offered the ferally elegant Ben Aris, got up like the master of ceremonies at the ballroom of a spa. He is flanked by Robert Oates, apologetic and pugnaous, and by Susan Porrett, most strouly upholstered in what can only be the very same *mairé* antique that Gracelia Grantly took on her wedding tour with Lord Dumbello. Both convey the impression of seeming more substantially Trollope than Ben Aris, who has strayed in from the pages of *Quixote* or Mrs Henry Wood.

Paradoxically, the director's almost total reliance upon the *Autobiography* limits, and muddies what might otherwise be an absorbing exercise in bringing the novelists to life. For the precise reason that the book itself is such a defiant essay in reticence.



One of Jacob de Gheyn's engravings of Officers and Soldiers of the Bodyguard of Emperor Rudolph II, a set of which is to be sold at Sotheby's on June 18.

## Amour proper

**John Hope Mason**

Bérénice  
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

Racine's plays depict a violent world. From the obsessive intredes of *La Thébaïde* to the harsh crucifixes of *Andronicus*, they portray events and emotions with a fierce intensity that is both frightening and compelling. His characters pursue their goals with a relentless energy. His force is elemental. Checked in one direction it breaks out in another. In a few moments the joy at the thought of possession can become the relief at the idea of destruction. It is a pitiless world, and the fact that Racine ended up believing in the severe God of the Jansenists is not in the least surprising.

There is one exception to this pattern — *Bérénice*. This play is wholly human, for it is neither inhuman nor superhuman nor supernatural. It is a tale without a single death, it never strikes a cruel note. It is written with Racine's mastery economy and concentration and the events move forward in their usual inexorable way, yet the pace does not have that driven quality which we find in the other tragedies, because none of the characters is at the mercy of a fierce inner drive. On the contrary, they are as human as you or I, and what they suffer from is the most human of emotions, love. In that respect, above all, *Bérénice* is different.

Although the motive force in most of Racine's plays is *amour*, the emotion involved is not love but passion. Indeed, it seems doubtful whether an Homeric or a Phœdre would ever get beyond the ecstatic regions of love. But in *Bérénice* the three main characters are not only to love, they have had time to get to know the person for what he or she really is. The experience of the play is not of passion that is thwarted but of love that must end.

The action is set in Rome in 79 AD. This is Imperial Rome but the Republic is not so remote that all memories of it are gone. Vergilian

has just died and his son Titus has been made Emperor. For five years Titus has been in love with Bérénice, but she is Queen of Palestine; Rome forbids its leaders to marry foreigners, and Rome hates royalty. When Antony became involved with Cleopatra he provoked his own destruction. The correct model is that set out in the founding myth of the Aeneid: Aeneas left Dido. Now Titus must leave Bérénice.

The play opens with the third principal character, Antiochus, a Middle Eastern king, and he also loves Bérénice. Ignorant of Roman pressures he presumes that now Titus has been made Emperor he will marry Bérénice, and he comes to say his final farewell to her. The opening sets the tone for everything that is to follow. It conveys a sense of imminent grief, of impending catastrophe. The desolate and magical line Antiochus speaks to Bérénice — 'Dans l'Orient désert quel deviat mon ennui?' — echoes through all the subsequent scenes.

Titus cannot bring himself to tell Bérénice they must part; when she is first told (by Antiochus) she refuses to believe it; when he then faces her he cannot spell it out; when he finally does so she cannot take it in. All the time there is an appalling sense of emptiness approaching; an unthinkable prospect of separation, banishment, exile. A world is dissolving in front of our eyes. The play ends with a moral tag — may this instance be an example to others — but these words are 'merely conventional'; what we feel is a sombre pain, that *tristesse majestueuse* Racine writes of in his preface.

The problem of translating Racine into English is well-known, and the problem of performing the plays is almost as great. Nowadays, however, we have a new solution to the latter, which is to reduce the scale of the theatre, to bring the audience to the actors. This eliminates the difficulty of the actors having to project over sustained periods. Intense emotion in a formal style. The Hammersmith production, by Christopher Fettes, succeeds very largely in these terms. It is simple, direct and well-focused. The demands on the actors are still considerable but that is the nature of

## Ashbery and old lace

**Peter Porter**

The Heroes; The Philosopher  
Café Theatre Upstairs

The Greeks themselves were fond of parodying and subverting their gods and epics. Sophisticated set in among commentators on Homeric heroes well before the Hellenistic Age. Euripides based his anti-heroic version of Helen in Egypt (not so anti-heroic in dramatic terms) on Stesichorus's poem of six generations previously. Thereafter, European dramatists and poets have had a field-day reinterpreting classical stories, with modern academic writers keeping up the strike rate. Where would French playwrights and filmmakers be without the full roll-call from Lempière? So John Ashbery is working an old vein in his amusing and effective play *The Heroes*, which has just completed a short run at the Café Theatre Upstairs, Charing Cross Road, presented, with a second Ashbery play, *The Philosopher*, by a young company called Buick of Signs.

*The Heroes* and *The Philosopher* are early Ashbery, and are written in prose, but his characteristic qualities of non sequitur and good humour are present throughout. *The Heroes* is very much more amiable and light-hearted than the kind of modern re-furbishing of myth familiar to us from the *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*. It shares with

*The Cocktail Party* a drawing-room or house party ethos. Achilles is host, with Patroclus the most moody of the residents, and Theseus, Ulysses, Circe and the odd guard and upbearer milling about. Theseus's Labyrinth is charmingly presented as the star guest's unavoidable story which must be related to each member of the house party. The anachronisms are genial — Theseus in the position of a person who believes that dada is still alive — and the heroes are not so much diminished as transported to a world where epic is either a giggle or a state of mental delusion.

The Chorus (a personable lady partygoer) keeps up the required Greek tone: 'I have seen many people in every possible relation to each other and I have never seen any good come of it.' A little later she announces, 'So far this play has been easy. From now on it's going to be more difficult to follow.' But it isn't, and the characters stay sane and dubiously self-explanatory to the end, which has a sort of 'Inspector Calls' ring and is firmly downbeat. En route, there are some of Ashbery's attractive throw-away lines of poetry: 'It is the querulously blue Mediterranean that draws these tears from this old sleep-on face.' There is little attempt at parody of Greek drama (nothing like Hocutt's immortal lines). Ashbery leaves the heroes 'as statues on the face of the building', even if they are aware of being 'disfigured by trash of folklore, excrement of centuries'.

All this might have been heavy-handed if the company had not acted so well and if Simon Fisher's direction had not been so sure and inventive. I continue to marvel at the high level of acting among young British companies. This was demonstrated recently when *The Dog Beneath the Skin* was revived at the Half Moon Theatre, and now Buick of Signs has emphasized it. Outstanding among the performers are Michael Darby as Ulysses and Mark Knox as Theseus.

Darby also plays Professor Ambleside in *The Philosopher*. Ambleside is an American Egyptologist who arrives mysteriously at

Hudson Hall, an old house on the banks of the River where assorted folk have assembled to hear the reading of the will of eccentric collector and millionaire, Jeremiah Maple. We are in highly recognizable country: the world of 1930s films featuring young girls being protected by and falling in love with wise-cracking old reporters, plus a supporting cast of old retainers, ludicrous policemen, sinister foreigners, escaped lunatics, Bronx prizefighters and their floozies, and so on. Ashbery's parody of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Cat and the Canary* and their like, was written before the rash of child-dread cartoons such as *Scabby-Dog*, but shares with them a good-bumoured love of the golden age of American commercial gothic. There is nothing highbrow in his parody. It is all disarmingly pastoral, and the actors and actresses respond with just the right degree of exaggeration and high spirits. Here Mr. Lydon, as wispy-haired, bespectacled Aunt Emily, comes into her own.

Buick of Signs was formed to bring less well-known American plays to British audiences. The company, as its title suggests, is drawn to works by Frank O'Hara, Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and the New York School, but Tennessee Williams and other mainstream figures are within its scope. Ashbery is hardly news in the States, but his early work is still largely unknown here. *The Heroes* and *The Philosopher* return next month to the Riverside Studios, and, as co-conspirators of acting should not mind them. Buick of Signs will give readings of the plays at 1.15 and performances at 8.00 on June 15-17 at the Riverside Studios.

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# remainders

Eric Korn

I would like you to share my enjoyment of So Sathaputra's New Model Thai-English Dictionary (Desk Edition), but am hampered by the inability of New Technology to cope with Thai script, to say nothing of my own ignorance. It's a pity, since the dictionary gives "a fairly comprehensive picture of Thailand - its more important place-names, its literature and drama" - at least so says So Sathaputra in his preface. Unable to reproduce the Gothic-infested writing of Thai script, I have hit on the following device: whenever I wish to indicate a sequence of unfamiliar vowels in the original, I will use the name of a Scottish county rendered obsolete by the recent reform of Local Government boundaries, and nomenclature. These names can be combined or inflected appropriately, thus:

Haddington An earthen jar; Haddington-wiki-Middleton n. a jar for keeping preserved garlics; (F) a fat girl; Haddington West a tall earthen jar often used for liquor; Haddington Central, a jar containing preserved fish, the clavicle, the collarbone.

or again  
Wigtownshire (of smell) offensive, stale, stuffy, stinking, having the characteristic odour of tiger

not to be confused with the unrelated homophone Wigtownshire, the facing round the edge of a coat on which buttons are sewn or buttonholes cut. Another handy vocable is Perth n.v.i.adv. ten thousand, a myriad, a non-hereditary title for court officials roughly equivalent to Aberdeenshire, saucy or impertinent. And why do they need a special word for "to be interested (in Indonesian politics)"? Saves time, I suppose, instead of going up to each other and having conversations like "Good Morning. Are you interested (in Indonesian politics)?" "No, not a lot," they can just say "Good Morning, do you Clackmannan?", "No, hardly at all", and then do something

else, like preparing Forfar, a sausage filled with entrails, almost like haggis (cf. Forfarish which means tears, seepage, originally palm-sugar but nowadays any sugar especially cane sugar) or laughing at people who are a bit Calithness and Sutherland (the year of the monkey; unnaturally white from the application of too much powder).

This simple technique allows me to speculate on cognate words, like Lanark a. vi. daring, bold, audacious, reckless (=Ayr); of a coconut, fully ripe, developing hard nut which can be turned into coconut cream; Lanark (slaughter) the testicles; Lanark vi. to bite off a leg; or again: Kinross a teleprinter; Kinross television or television; Kintyre telephone. The root word Kin- occurs by itself and means offence, crime, punishment. Have you read Dostoevsky's *Kin and Kiu*? It's said to be better than in Russian.

When the doorbell chimes (clotice of Beethoven's Fifth and Supertramp), and an unexpected caller cries: "Congratulations, Sir and Madam! You have just won an all-expenses-paid trip for two to the Era of your choice on a fabulous British Anachronisms luxury Time Machine (© H. G. Wells) with champagne lunch en route and free fashion flight bag", you know when to choose, don't you? Well, I do, and I'm opting for October 4 through 6, 1898, in Denver, Colorado, scene of the Fourth Annual Festival of Mountain and Plain.

Not but what the First Annual Festival might not have been fun; "instituted as a hazardous adventure through many trials and misgivings, through doubts and heartfailings, it proceeded surely and determinedly to its first glorious and successful issue", not but what the 1892 Festival (in Indonesian politics)? "No, not a lot", they can just say "Good Morning, do you Clackmannan?", "No, hardly at all", and then do something

programme of the 1898 shindig, a magnificent piece of book-production, shaped like a baroque oyster (the famous Denver clam), full of magnanimous sentiments expressed in the swastika of swastika. Surely never since fifteenth-century Florence, Italy (I could have chosen to go there but the air is not so health-giving) have such elaborately fantasiticated floats trundled past such dazed bystanders, in pursuit of the twin objectives of Entertainment and Enlightenment. "Many a schoolpuzzled child is suddenly awakened to a revelation that clears up the mist of study that has disturbed the little weaned brain", and the brochure pictures forty-one of the marvels, with a general view of the grandstand, "an elaborate and artistic structure". Montezuma rolls past in more-than-occidental splendour, with palm fronds and punkah-wallahs and a lady, apparently nubile and nude, with butterfly wings. He is followed by the Santa Maria, the Cliff Dwellings of the Aborigines, the Landing of Columbus and Cortez (punkah-wallahs sink to knees in instant recognition of arrival of Religion and Hygiene) and the Sinking of the Merimac (apparently being vigorously set about by Edinburgh Castle). There are more ships in the Navy, not, as far as I can judge, actually model boats on floats, but huge postcards on wheels. Recent history is celebrated ("was horrid war, disease and death"), but soon comes the surrender at Santiago ("a bright rift in the murky clouds of horrid war"), Cuba entering the Circle of American Republics ("one more star of freedom added to the galaxy of disenthralled nations by the power of Uncle Sam"), and we return to the cheerier themes of Colorado, Gold ("no terrors for the hardy miner of the avalanche or iceberg") and Prosperity - more delightful young persons doubtless imported from lax Wyoming, with lashings of palm-fronds, pine boughs and tropical lei, and a great deal of what appears to be Royal Marzipan icing.

And that's just the sober education stuff. Then come the jolly floats of the Slaves of the Silver Serpent, a benign conspiratorial guild - "though undiscoversable to others, yet their ramifications and silent espionage are so omnipresent that all things seem to them as the pages of an open book". This year they have chosen to create a living gazetteer, and before our astonished and grateful gaze pass Russia (Peter the Great in sleigh with much Royal icing and pine trees), Egypt (Sphinx, icling, and palm trees), England (Titanic, butterflies, large mushroom), Scotland (Macbeth), Africa (the Lake of the), and the beautiful little Queen "Holland, who reigns serene o'er the land of sturdy unflinching men; and whose women are a synonym for neatness and purity. And finally (unless my programme is lacking a few pages at the end) and climactically comes Germany, here represented by Lohengrin, a Swan Car like a great golden gothic initial G filled with water and reeds and waterlilies on which floats another Swanboat, carrying the happy couple - in all probability W. N. Byers and his lady, President of the Board of Directors, all of whose names appear on page 4; set out in curious tanks like a concrete poem to make the shape of a butterfly or perhaps a Rocky Mountain Goat, doubtless the State Mammal of Colorado (Motto: Fide Fodlo).

And sooo, too soon, it is evening, and the white-winged dove of Peace settles o'er the expectant land, and his calm assuaging presence spreads joy and heart's ease over all, and later Frivolity will reign supreme amidst the mazy whirl of joyous dance (Denver has even been noted for the strict pinetious observance of propriety in all of its public festivities). When Slain processes past, represented by the "sacred White Elephant whose crushing tread instures eternal bliss to those whose prostrate bodies are strewn in adoration in his pathway, I know exactly how they feel, and I think I shall

chuck myself under the wheels of Ceres ("the goddess of the harvest has chosen her abode in the sun-kissed realms of favored Colorado") and live an eternal autumn afternoon.

Idly leafing through *The Which? Book of Do-It-Yourself*, in the hope of finding Which? or What? it recommended doing to oneself, I stumbled over the to me unknown literary ritual of Laying the Screed. Unfortunately, the liturgy was described in a vocabulary of exotic jargon ("brush in cement-water grout and tamp it thoroughly with a flat-bottomed punner.") I'm partial to punners, whether steatopygous or platypygous, who I take to be the manufacturers of "quibbles, puns, punnets or pundrigions, of which fifteen will not make up one single jest", but I know none who are prepared to be tampered with. "Grouting" is used, says QED, by both V. Woolf and N. Annan as a near-synonym for pig-like rooting or rooting or rootling. Has *Which?* mispunctuated? Should it be "brush in cement" (like "hands on hips"); "water; grout; and tamp ..."? My screed remains recalcitrantly unaided.

But who needs a Time Machine (© H. G. Wells)? To anyone with a library, all time is eternally present, and not so much undependable as available for passing in large quantities with activities like picking the all-time England Versus Rest-of-World XI (Haldor Laxness c. J. Galsworthy, b. Trollope A., 22; Hroswitha, run out, 31; Borges J.-L., was stumped, infinity). Accordingly, as a relaxation from the serious business of lobbying for the Nobel Prize for Physics on behalf of Democritus of Abdera - and did you know, in passing, that the inhabitants of Abdera, like the citizens of Gotham and Ebrington, were a byword among their neighbours for foolishness, being prone, allegedly, to construct ornate fountains without first checking on the availability of a water supply, something of a *zine qur nou*, say pundits, for ornate fountains, and how has one managed for so long to express opinions on the literary and political scene without referring constantly to the Aberism of its frequenters - as a sort of hobby, I say, I am proposing Gertrude S. Wentworth-James for a post-humous Booker Prize in 1984, largely on the basis of *Pink Purty* (popular edition, 1910) a novel so crammed with rich aperçus that one wants to read it very slowly, if at all. Mrs G. de S. W.-J., "wonderfully clever", *Wor Office (Times)* has a startling theory about the young, reckoning that English girls between fourteen and eighteen could give lessons in ruthlessness to your average Goth Hun or Vandal. "Conscience only develops as puberty becomes established, and the physical and mental conditions of a large proportion of flappers are such as to make them shiver with recollection when their hair goes up for good ... if the moral kick of dawning puberty and immaturity be sufficiently deep, she will steal, fornicate and kill" strong words for a popular ("refreshing humour", *Newcastle Chronicle*) novelist in 1910. I thought flapper was a post-WWI word, but QED, as ever, set me right; it comes most likely from a dialect word meaning a young partridge and started pecking and worked its way up: "Very young girls trained to vice", 1889 *Diet. Slang*; "There's a stunning flapper", 1903; "flapperdom", "flapperish", "flapperhood", "let me take her out on the flapper-bracket of a motor-bike", 1916; and the spectacularly offensive remark in the 1917 *Church Quarterly Review* "Educated India ... is still possibly a flapper, stage 4: little awkward but full of the joy of life".

Mrs Wentworth-James's fictional flapper is fourteen, professing eighteen and passing for twenty-two, trades wicked modern novels "that cost four pence to buy or £2.12s.6d

to borrow" - (*Twentyfour Hours and The Serpent of Turin* are the satirical titles Mrs Wentworth-James cites) has a sixteen-inch waist and an appetite which casts a lurid light on Edwardian gourmandise:

Lil attacked sardines, anchovies, oily potato salad, and shrimps with a gusto that did not at all interfere with her subsequent enjoyment of *potage, merles*, (with daintily curved fingers she picked the slimy discoloured morsels off their shells before conveying them to her innocent red lips), meat, birds, *pausserie*, dessert and *glace*. "Cynthia says nothing shows middle-class breeding so clearly as to get fat because you eat, to catch cold if you wear low frocks, and to get sleepy if you aren't in bed by ten. I always mean to gorge, to be as *décolletée* as I dare, and to go to bed after midnight, so that what Cynthia calls 'the hall-mark of Hampstead' shan't be upon me."

Dashing stuff, though I'm a trifle worried about those *merles*, but I can imagine grilled songbirds spitted and placed on scallop shells for the Prince of Wales and a few select friends; anyway, Lil gets "greedy for a diet more poisonous than French cookery or Italian ices" and undertakes some brisk kissing in the woods around Le Touquet with handsome Derrick. This rapidly leads to the threat of a chat with Papa, when he is post-prandially affable ("You'll have coffee and 'licks' of course, won't you, Papa?") so Derrick takes the next boat to Dover little suspecting that Lil has his unmistakable waistcoat button and is bent on vengeance. By part 11 "the conscienceless folly of flapper days was strengthened by the half-mad desires of forming womanhood" and many a dramatic scene is played out at Mansion House banquets, in Thorogton Street, at a Midlands Hydron ("too 'expy' for me here") and similar altars of depravity, before the climax in which it is only the villain's kindness to stray cats that entitles him to be forgiven for slashing his ex-mistress's portrait, suborning Lil so that he could make improper advances to her married sister, and omitting to tell her that he was Jewish. It's not just a racy novel but a profound comment on the existential dilemmas of alienated youth (*Watch out Bugle*) and I hope the selectors will give it careful consideration.

People send me things sometimes, for which I am grateful. If I don't acknowledge them it isn't that I am indolent (well yes) or unappreciative (no), but that sometimes the words won't come.

Dear Auntie, Thank you very much for the nice Danish railway ticket. It is just what I wanted. Hope you had a good Christmas. Must close now.

Actually it is a square of yellow pasteboard with the words "Killing Tur og Retur" and it may be a free pass to a Faroese wrestling match. Tur and Retur are a double act from Nifheim, like Gog and Magog, or Gog and Magog as they are called locally. And Big-Mouth Killing may have a chance against them. Or maybe it is "Tur, Og, Retur", the pattern of "Play, Gypsy, Play" or "Fight-and-Fight-again".

And thanks too for a splendidly informative letter from Stuart B. Schimmel of New York, the doyen of airline sick-bag collectors. He doesn't say whether there is an international organization yet, but he plainly looks ahead to the Schimmel Request, centrepiece of a masterly serious study collection at some favoured University. His favourite specimen has the message "and take a little something home for your dog".

Young and enthusiastic scholars keen to contribute to symposia on Byron and Scott should contact: Alan Bold, Balmaine, Burns East Cottage, Marlinch, Glenrethes, Fife KY7 6NE.

## The London Antiquarian Book Fair

Nicolas Barker

Years ago (it now seems) the Antiquarian Book Fair was started in the cosy but hardly convenient quarters of the National Book League, then in Albemarle Street. The makeshift stalls were all hugger-mugger, and booksellers and customers were apt to complain of the shortage of *potage, merles*, (with daintily curved fingers she picked the slimy discoloured morsels off their shells before conveying them to her innocent red lips), meat, birds, *pausserie*, dessert and *glace*. "Cynthia says nothing shows middle-class breeding so clearly as to get fat because you eat, to catch cold if you wear low frocks, and to get sleepy if you aren't in bed by ten. I always mean to gorge, to be as *décolletée* as I dare, and to go to bed after midnight, so that what Cynthia calls 'the hall-mark of Hampstead' shan't be upon me."

Probably there are fewer books, or at least more people chasing them. Despite gloomy tales of cuts in library purchase grants and the difficulty of "getting through" to the new rich, whether the Japanese or Arab sheikhs, books change hands with remarkable rapidity. It used to be said that all this commerce took place inside the trade, with booksellers all buying and selling from and to each other; there ought to have been a catch somewhere, like those chain letters that promised limitless wealth, but it didn't seem to apply to the old book trade.

But now Sir William Rees-Mogg

tells us to buy books as investments. Good investments they are, too, combining cultural uplift with excellent capital growth prospects. The trade is shocked by this bare-faced realism, preferring to believe that people will buy their Caxtons and North's Plutarch to read, or, at least, like being touched by the King's Evil, to get some benefit from patting them.

There will be over one hundred booksellers there. The great Rosenthal clan will be there, from Oxford, Italy and San Francisco, whence also comes Serendipity Books, Björck & Björsson, Sebastian D'Orsi, Stephanie Hoppen, Libreria Antiquaria Soave, Ursus Books, Words Etcetera, and others less exotic will all be there. The books are even more various, from

incunables to pop-up books. One of the nicest is an English Bible in an outstanding 1650ish Paris binding, an improbable combination due to the bibliophilic tastes of England's first systematic book-collector, George Thomason. This is on the stall of R. D. Steedman of Newcastle, whence it must soon, I hope, rejoin Thomason's great collection at the British Library.

Added attractions are an exhibition of hand-press printing by the Whittington Press and, as opener, no less a figure than Barry Humphries, here not as Dame Edna but as a serious collector of fin-de-siècle prose and verse, Gothic novels and Jamesian (M.R. and H.) ghost stories. He'll be on at 11 am on June 8, and the Fair will run for three days thereafter, 11 am to 8 pm.



Bilder aus dem Tierleben, drawings for a sat transformation book of 1895, drawn and made by Lohar Megendorfer, and sold to Sotheby's as part of the Megendorfer Archive on June 2.

## A year in the antiquarian book trade

William Rees-Mogg

On May 1, 1981, I became the proprietor of Pickering and Chatto, antiquarian booksellers since 1820. On March 3, 1982, I took Dawsons of Pall Mall into Pickering and moved to Dawsons' premises in Pall Mall. On May 1, we published our first major stock catalogue, covering English Literature, Economics, Science, Medicine, Music and Travel, and with special sections on Boyle and Gibbon's library. I have therefore had quite a busy year, first becoming a bookseller and then developing the business.

It is a delightful business to be in. Most, though not quite all, book people are extremely pleasant people to deal with. That is true of private collectors, of libraries, of scholars and of my fellow dealers. Librarians genuinely enjoy showing their collections; dealers buy off each other; we are a very symbiotic trade; it is a pleasure to find the right book for a collector.

'Bookselling is in some ways a strange branch of salesmanship. I think it is true to say that it is the buying and not the selling which makes a good bookshop - though one's ability to buy depends on one's success in selling. There are booksellers who could sell a First Edition of Adam Smith to a surgeon from Phoenix, Arizona, who is forming a specialist collection in anaesthesia. I do not think I am one of them. I try to treat customers as I liked to be treated when I was a customer; the opportunity to browse, no pressure to buy, possibly a cup of coffee, some conversation, but not too much, seem to me to be the right way to allow a customer to enjoy our books.

I have a rule never to press customers to buy expensive books - that is, books that are expensive, for them. If I was dealing with a very wealthy client, I would obviously go a little higher than I would in the ordinary way. I do allow myself to persuade customers to buy books that are priced at the bottom end of our range when I know that a collector would have snapped them up. There are bargains in every catalogue, our latest catalogue had a

very fresh and largely unopened copy of the first edition of William Lisle Bowles, *The Poetical Works*, Edinb., James Nichol, 1855, for \$65. Rather than reprice it, I persuaded a customer who lives where Bowles was once the rector and wrote some of his poems, that he should take it.

The economics of bookselling are also very strange. Every bookseller needs to sell - he has to cover his costs, he wants to make a profit. But successful bookselling depends upon having a strong stock, with some fresh items all the time, but with a good range of major works. I like the world to know that if they want a copy of Collins's *Odes*, 1747, they are more likely to find it at Pickering than anywhere. It will not necessarily be cheap - it is not a cheap book - but it will be there.

If I am into profit, and I sell my Collins's *Odes*, I shall want to replace it. I shall first have to pay the expenses of selling it, then I shall have to pay tax, probably at forty per cent, on my profit. Then I shall have to replace it. If, as is often the case, I sell a book which comes from old stock, and has therefore a low original cost, perhaps from the 1960s, the net sum realized, after tax, can be below the replacement cost of the book. So long, therefore, as I am doing profitable business, and therefore paying tax, the sale of an additional really good book - the book that our customers expect Pickering to have - produces only a very doubtful advantage. The cheapest way to acquire new stock may be not to sell the book.

For this reason, antiquarian booksellers have no great motive to maximize sales of their best material though they have a very strong incentive to reach a comfortable level of sales. The desire to build up a strong stock as possible is important to almost all booksellers and becomes the overriding aim of some of us. The stock eventually generates the profits when they are wanted.

This approach to bookselling makes it unattractive to go substantially into debt. A stock which would itself have been appreciating at around fifteen per cent compound during the 1970s does not want to have a corresponding interest charge to bear. My own rough rule of

thumb is that it makes sense to finance customer credit by borrowing, but not, save as an exception, to finance stock purchasing. If a customer takes sixty days to pay, the bookseller does, that costs the bookseller 2½ per cent on the book, if the finance is on bank overdraft, but the funds to repay the overdraft are going to be brought in as the result of a sale already made on an invoice already issued. The trade generally pays faster, but receives a trade discount.

The success of an antiquarian bookseller therefore depends most on his capacity as a buyer. Here, John Carter's epigram about book collecting applies: "It is not the early bird who gets the worm, but the bird who knows a worm when he sees one." What collectors want to see is a stock which has as great a number of really interesting books in it as possible. Some will be expensive, some not expensive at all. It is the quality of interest that matters.

I do not think that that is primarily a bibliographical matter. A generation ago the catalogue note "first issue with comma misplaced on line 3 of signature U12" was what collectors were looking for. Now it seems to me that booksellers need to spend as much time reading their books as reading their bibliographies. The prime work of reference is the book itself. In our present catalogue, it is the treatment of books like the first Chesterfield *Letter* (broadsheet, Dublin 1746) - now sold to a national library - or Bachard's *Contempt of the Clergy* 1670, or of Pope's copy of Dryden's edition of Drayton's *Epistiles* 1737, which gives me real satisfaction, because they bring out points about the books and their real significance, which had not been made before. A good bookseller's catalogue should make as many interesting observations on literature as it does on bibliography.

It is the discovery of under-appreciated books which provides the greatest pleasure. I have just bought, in Austin, Texas, a copy of the first poetical miscellany published in America. That seems to me to be a very significant book by any standards; it is the kind of book I like to put into Pickering's stock, just as when I was a collector it was the kind of book I liked to have in my own collection.

## PBFA London Book Fair

The London Book Fair of the Provincial Booksellers' Fairs Association will be opened officially at 11.30 am on Monday June 7 at the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London W.C.1, by Rosemary Leach and David Swift, who are currently starring in the stage production of *Helene Hanft's 84 Charing Cross Road* at the Ambassadors Theatre. It is estimated that there will be over 18,000 titles on sale at the fair, in every price range.

The PBFA was founded in 1972 and has shown a remarkable growth over its first decade. It has now achieved a membership of over 600, the highest of any second-hand and antiquarian book trade association in the world, and as a result has committed itself to acquiring permanent headquarters in London to provide

exhibition facilities. The emphasis of the Association is on care not simply about books but also about members and customers.

At this Fair there will be 153 stands, and a remarkable range of material will be on sale, from the large collection of vintage detective fiction offered by Camille Wolff (Grey House Books) at prices between £9 and £100, to M. E. Korn's copy of Thomas Hall's tract on the "Loathsome of Long Hairs" discussed in the pages of *Helene Hanft's 84 Charing Cross Road*, a lavishly illustrated Victorian manuscript of the *Idylls of the King* from Mirville Vanlaeckens (E200), and Sweet's *British Flower Garden* in seven volumes, 1823-35, offered by Kent Nielsen at £3,000.

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## to the editor

## 'The Mathematical Experience'

Sir, — The review by Roger Penrose (May 14) contains a number of false or misleading statements in the philosophy of mathematics. None of the errors noted below concerns the book itself.

1. "Cantor's theory of infinite sets led to the Russell-Whitehead-Frege attempt to build the foundations of mathematics on the principles of logic (logicism), which effectively means on set theory... it also led to paradoxes..." There are at least two errors here. (a) Frege's important 1884 book, which presents a logicist account of arithmetic as reducible to logic, displays an Cantorian influence; indeed, the approaches of Cantor and Frege are, philosophically and mathematically, fundamentally different, a difference only concealed by classifying both as Platonic realists. (b) Cantor's approach, unlike Frege's, did not lead to paradoxes, but rather to clarification of one notion of set. Russell's paradox, discovered originally for a system of Frege, led to the presumably consistent theory of Principia Mathematica (1910-13), a theory of types which might count as a set theory, but which for various reasons fails to be logicist. At least one (presumably consistent) development of Frege's original approach was noticed briefly by Russell in 1904-06 and was elaborated in V. O. Quine's *Mathematical Logic* (revised edition 1951; ironically the system of the first edition was inconsistent). Quine's theory, though formulated in the usual language of the theory of sets and classes, is, however, not generally regarded as a theory of sets.

2. The logicist approach "led in the early part of this century to the mathematical philosophy of 'formalism'. According to the formalist philosophy (which may itself be regarded as a development of logicism), mathematics is reduced, in effect, to a kind of (meaningless) game." Two further things are wrong here. First, formalism is older than logicism and the sort of game formalism quoted goes back at least to 1872 (Hilbert). Second, a spectrum of formalist views was vigorously opposed, not always politely, by Frege, who criticized (among others) Hankel, Heine, Thomae and Hilbert. Nevertheless, *pace* Penrose, the view that "mathematics is no more than a meaningless game" cannot easily be ascribed to Hilbert.

3. The statement that there are,

for example, 100 successive 7s in the decimal expansion of  $\pi$  is not, again *pace* Penrose, asserted by intuitionists "to be neither true nor false at the present time". They neither assert the statement nor reject it, and no more do they assert that it is neither true nor false. Intuitionists prefer not to use the word "false", but will not accept as a principle that a statement is either true or to be rejected, holding that this disjunction is assertible only if one of its disjuncts is so.

4. Mathematical Platonists and realists do not generally ascribe to mathematical existence "a higher degree of perfection than mere physical existence". Some followers of St. Anselm may have taken such a theological view, but a more restrained contemporary realism holds that though quantification over mathematical entities is unavoidable, the sort of existence involved might be logically akin to that of such simple logical truths as "anything which has each of two properties F and G has property F".

5. Penrose professes himself unable "to understand how the strict formalist view can be continued to be upheld in the light of Gödel's devastating... argument". Gödel's work is indeed of quite fundamental importance for mathematical logic and the foundations of mathematics, and his first incompleteness theorem of 1931 establishes not only that in any formal system there are sentences neither provable nor refutable, but also that some such sentences can be seen to express what are called arithmetical truths. But a formalist who rejects all truth to mathematics, even that of  $2+2=4$ , need not have his philosophy disturbed by Gödel's results. Some formalist views may be antecedently implausible, but the case has not been established for the purely philosophical significance of Gödel's theorem claimed by Penrose.

6. "We have no clear reason to believe, as yet, that non-Cantorian set theories can exist..." What might count as such clear reason? Some non-Cantorian set theories, presumably consistent, are incompatible with the standard theory, and it is by no means clear what it would amount to for there to be one true set theory. Plausibly, someone could be a realist about arithmetic without being a realist about the continuum hypothesis — or, again, a realist about that without ascribing a determinate truth-value to set-theoretic claims for the existence of certain very large infinities. Perhaps it is not at present judged reasonable to ask a realist to state how far his realism

extends, but it is surely in order to ask what sort of considerations might determine the extent of a realist commitment.

Many philosophers have erred in what they have written about mathematics. Nevertheless, philosophy of mathematics also has intellectual standards, and is not just a rag-bag of prejudices.

May I conclude by expressing a wholehearted welcome for the publication of an article on a numerate book by a numerate reviewer?

J. M. B. MOSS,  
Department of Mathematics, King's College, Strand, London WC2.

## Public Lending Right

Sir, — Surely there must be other author-illustrators as outraged as I am at the moment. I discovered recently that children's picture books cannot be registered for Public Lending Right unless they contain fifty per cent text on a single page. As I receive royalties from my books I naturally expected to be able to benefit from PLR — which has been so hard fought for and long awaited.

Picture books are expensive, so that many children can only see them by borrowing from a public library. My own books are bought by libraries throughout the country and widely borrowed. I would be interested if someone could explain why I, and others like me, should be treated differently from our fellow writers.

JOANNA TROUGHTON,  
109 Daws Lane, London NW7.

## Robert Graves

Sir, — At the end of his interesting review (May 21) of Martin Seymour-Smith's biography of Robert Graves, Anthony Burgess quotes the following lines from Graves:

He continues quick and dull in his clear images;  
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.  
He, in a new confusion of his understanding;  
I, in a new understanding of my confusion.

Mr Burgess ends his article with the comment "he being everybody else". Perhaps there is a sense, clear to Burgess, in which "he" is "everybody else", but in fact Graves was thinking of a particular fellow poet. I happen to know this because the poem fascinated me and when I first met Graves in Devonshire during the last war, I asked him who it was. He said: "Oh, there was a chap called Humbert Wolfe who was writing poetry at the time I wrote that, about whom there was a great deal of fuss." Of course, I do not remember his exact words but that was the sense of them. They have remained in my mind because they struck me as odd since one thing I did not think about Humbert Wolfe was that he wrote strikingly clear images. I do not want to spoil Mr Burgess's (to me) slightly cryptic conclusion, and I hope it does not do so to point this out.

STEPHEN SPENDER,  
15 Loudoun Road, London NW8.

## Allusion in Poetry

Sir, — Charles Madge and Tom Paulin (Letters, May 21) take up a point I raised in my review (May 7) of John Hollander's *The Figure of Echo*, and which seems to me of exceptional critical interest, particularly today. I am glad two poets took the same view, even in disagreement.

Tom Paulin points out that Hardy's "Afterwards" is full of echoes, even the lines which I quoted about the "bell of quietude". That Hardy intended a conscious reference, either playful or otherwise, to Mark 10:34, in the bell's tones cut off by the "crossing breeze" "Till they rise again", seems to me doubtful, although his mind and style were so full of biblical phrases that it could happen unconsciously, and it certainly strengthened the argument for Echo.

But the crucial distinction I wished to make was between the ghostliness of Echo in poetry and new kinds of truth or fact, what oft was seen but never seen in words. The reader of the last stanza of "Afterwards" suddenly hears something new; it may already be a part of his experience but it has never appeared in language before. Most have seen a

wave, but not really until they have seen Keats's wave "down whose green back the short-liv'd foam all hoar, Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence" — or seen meo with licence-plates on a station platform, but not absolutely till they spiral through two lines of Larkin's very echoic poem "I remember I remember".

It used to be a cliché to say that the language of poetry "disimprisons the soul of fact". Not any more, in our present critical climate of metaphor and structure, which kills off belief in words as Nietzsche and the nineteenth century killed belief in God. I have always felt that de Saussure's observation, echoed by every critic today, about the arbitrary nature of words, showed that he had no idea — why should he? — what poetry was all about. Its primary function is precisely to transcend, or seem to, the solitude of language, and make those words the only ones for these experiences. Echo underwrites the process, but the process itself is to give words the natural inevitability of things.

JOHN BAYLEY,  
St Catherine's College, Oxford.

## Camels and Others

Sir, — The camel is not the only animal on whose sexual behaviour some interesting light is thrown by orally transmitted verse. A well-known Oxford rhyme records another case of non-cooperation by, at any rate, the hedgehog:

If you try to hugger a hedgehog  
It rolls itself into a ball  
And eminent scientists tell us  
It never gets buggered at all.

But further extensive researches have incontrovertibly shown. That comparative safety, at Kettle, is enjoyed by the hedgehog alone.

As Harry V. Kemp demonstrates, however (Letters, May 21), a definitive text can never be established for literature of this nature. In the penultimate line the names of at least five other colleges would seem

CHARLES MONTEITH,  
3 Queen Square, London WC1.

## Among this week's contributors

ORALD ABRAHAM'S *The Concise Oxford History of Music* was published in 1980.

MARK AMORY is the editor of *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, 1980.

OLIVER M. ASHFORD was editor of the *World Meteorological Organization Bulletin* from 1952 to 1975.

PAUL BAILEY's most recent novel is *Old Soldiers*, 1980.

NICOLAS BARKER is Head of Conservation at the British Library.

ALAN BELL is Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.

LOBO BELGER's books include *The Intellectual in Politics*, 1970.

DOUGLAS DUNN's most recent collection of poems is *St. Kilda's Parliament*, 1981.

DONALD FANGER is Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Harvard. His most recent book is *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, 1979.

SIR WILLIAM HALEY was editor of *The Times* from 1952-1966.

TIM HILTON's books include *Picasso*, 1976.

JOHN HOPE MASON's *The Indigenous Religions* was published in 1979.

ROBERT JASON is an Honorary Research Fellow of University College London, where he is Associate Director of the Survey of English Usage.

M. V. JONES's books include *Dostoyevsky: the Novel of Discard*, 1976.

JONATHAN KEATES teaches English at the City of London School.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

W. M. LAMONT's books include *Richard Baxter and the Millennium*, 1979.

HERMIONA LEE's *Elizabeth Bowen: An Examination* was published last year.

LAURENCE LERNER's collections of poems include *The Man I Killed*, 1980.

MARGARET LYTTELTON is the author of *Borgo Architecture in Classical Antiquity*, 1974.

P. J. PARISH is Bonar Professor of Modern History, University of Dundee. His books include *Slavery: The Many Faces of a Southern Institution*, 1979.

PETER PORTER's collections of poems include *English Subtleties*, 1981.

ANTHONY QUINTON is President of Trinity College, Oxford. His books include *The Politics of Imperfection*, 1978, and *Francis Bacon*, 1980.

SIR WILLIAM REES-MOORE was editor of *The Times* from 1967-1981.

DON RIMINGTON is Senior Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Leeds.

LOBO ROLL is the author of *A History of Economic Thought*, 1973.

IVAN ROOTS is the editor of *Cromwell*, 1974.

DAVID SNOW is the author of *A Study of Blackbirds*, 1958, and *The Web of Adaptation*, 1976.

ARTHUR TERRY is Professor of Literature at the University of Essex. His books include *Catholic Literature*, 1975.

WILLIAM THOMAS is a Student of Christ Church, Oxford.

CHRISTOPHER THORNE's books include: *Allies of a Kind: the United States, Britain and the War Against Japan 1914-1945*, 1978.

JENNIFER UOLOW is the editor of *Essays on Literature and Art by Walter Pater*, 1975.

KENALL WALTON is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan.

J. E. WATKINS is Professor of Medical Microbiology at the Welsh National School of Medicine.

J. J. WILKES is Professor of Archaeology of the Roman Province at the University of London.

ESMOND WRIGHT is Director of the Institute of United States Studies at the University of London.

J. M. ZIMAN is Professor of Physics at the University of Bristol. His *Physics: Problems and Enigmas* was published last year.

## REFERENCE

## Avifauna in action

David Snow

ROGER TORY PETERSON and VIRGINIA MARIE PETERSON:

*Audubon's Birds of America* 43pp, with 917 illustrations including 482 in full colour. Heinemann. £65. 434 58701 X

Audubon's *Birds of America* (1827-1838), in double-plate format, is the largest bird book ever produced. It contained 435 plates, measured 39½x29½ inches, and the heaviest volume weighed 56 lb. All the birds were reproduced life-size, so that herons and flamingos had to have their heads bowed down — even in this gigantic format — and small birds were lost on the page. The 134 complete sets that survive are priceless, and single prints from sets that have been broken up may fetch thousands of pounds. In the circumstances few have an opportunity to judge the quality of the work at first hand. In 1937 Macmillan produced a comparatively cheap edition in comparatively small size (12½x9 inches). The quality of the colour reproduction was not very good, but it gave some idea of the magnitude of Audubon's achievement. In 1966 Michael Joseph produced reproductions of the original water-colours, from which the engravings were made, in a limited two-volume edition; but these are very different from the coloured engravings of *The Birds of America*. They enhance Audubon's reputation as a bird artist but, lacking the backgrounds and details of vegetation which were put in by Audubon's team of assistants, one of whom was an accomplished botanical artist, they give no idea of the highly wrought and decorated designs of the finished work. It is only now, with the publication of this "baby elephant folio", that one can get an adequate impression of the great work other than by access to the rare originals.

This "baby elephant" is no meon size. It is not so much its dimensions, impressive though they are (15½x12 inches), but its thickness (over 3 inches) and weight (16 lb) that are remarkable. It must be the heaviest bird book published in the last few decades. It is beautifully produced and well bound, and at £65 is remarkably good value. No doubt all this was possible because publication was sponsored by the Audubon Society and large sales may be expected to the society's huge membership.

The publishers claim that the colour reproduction is very faithful to the original — a claim that is not easy to check but which seems justified. Some of the smaller birds are nearly the same size as in the original edition; the bigger birds have been considerably reduced. Instead of the haphazard sequence of the original edition, they are arranged in systematic order and the modern vernacular and scientific names are used, with Audubon's names, if different, in brackets. The plates are grouped in batches of twenty to forty, each of which is preceded by a section of text by the two Petersons giving brief accounts of the birds illustrated. These are not dry entries of handbook type but are enjoyable miniature essays mentioning points of interest relating to the plates and the circumstances in which Audubon found and drew the birds.

Rather unexpectedly, after the introductory passage, Audubon's life and work, and only marginally relevant to the book's main purpose, there is a twenty-five-page essay by Roger Tory Peterson on American bird painters past and present, well illustrated with forty-six colour reproductions, showing (the whole range of bird painting from the stiff portraits of Audubon's two predecessors, Mark Catesby and Alexander Wilson, to the most recent work of the latest generation of bird artists. Peterson is one of a highly articulate group of American bird painters whose writing enhances one's enjoyment of his own and others' work. This section of the book, which is something of a bonus, contained my half-formed opinion that the last twenty-five years have seen the rise and

flowering of an outstanding school of North American bird painters.

Audubon's work has always been controversial. He imbued his birds with the restless energy that marked his whole career and enabled him to carry through a grandiose project of publication of which *Birds of America* was only a part. Today, with eyes educated by the camera and by generations of bird artists who have built on foundations laid by their predecessors, we know what birds look like, whether sitting quietly or engaged in a rapid aerial manoeuvre. To remind ourselves that it is not easy to draw a bird in action without this background of accumulated experience and special knowledge, we have only to look at a flying bird in a landscape by any artist earlier than the nineteenth century. The most gifted draftsman produced the most life-like, aerodynamically impossible renderings. Thus, Audubon attempted a dauntingly difficult task: all his birds are in action, not one is just standing or perching in the conventional attitude in which they are shown in a modern field-guide. He developed the technique of wiring up freshly shot specimens in the attitude that he wanted to illustrate; and since he was an acute observer of birds in life, as well as a skilled draftsman and painter, he was often very successful. Only his flying birds are failures more often than not; his pair of Blue-winged Teal

hurtle through the air as if catapulted in a state of paralysis. But it was not until the 1930s that Peter Scott discovered, and was able to put on canvas, the real appearance of a flying duck.

Approaching this book with a feeling that Audubon has been overrated, I was converted to a state of almost unqualified admiration. He attempted something impossibly ambitious, and to a very large extent he succeeded. Very few large painters today, with all the benefits of high-speed photography at their disposal, dare to illustrate birds in the extravagant postures that we know they adopt. It is interesting to speculate on what Audubon would have achieved if he had been born 150 years later.

I have only one minor complaint about this otherwise admirable book. The plates were the products of collaboration, between Audubon and the artists who completed the backgrounds and, especially, did the beautiful plant paintings that provide the settings for so many of the birds. Full justice is done them in the introductory text, Joseph Mason, who started work when he was thirteen, was the best of them. But many who look at this book will surely want to know, as I did, what all these plants are. I am sure that botanists must have named them all, as all are clearly identifiable and drawn from life. A few words added to the sections of text between each batch of plates would have satisfied our curiosity.

## Parson's pecking order

Redmond O'Hanlon

F. O. MORRIS:

*British Birds: A Selection from the Original Work* Edited and with an introduction by Tony Soper 240pp. HPR Publications. £20. 0 906671 37 X

Ten years old and standing in Beach's Second Hand Bookshop in Salisbury, I noticed, one incandescent week, in the dusky bay on the right which was labelled, high up NATURAL HISTORY, eight dulled volumes full of the most beautiful pictures in the world. About a thousand years of pocket-money, two pounds and ten shillings, secured them all, even A. F. Lydon's little grebe, for instance, engraved by Benjamin Fawcett and hand-coloured, the dabchick, round as a baby's buttock, and seen from ten inches away along the surface of the river, as if one was a water rat.

An identical edition, two Grosvenor Hotel Book Fairs ago, was offered at £600, which is an excellent reason for this reprint. The photographically reproduced plates have lost much of the hypnotic attraction of the originals — but the text itself, in this first of a mere two volumes (the second will include the gamebirds and the waterfowl) has lost little by Tony Soper's necessary disregard of the Egyptian Vulture, the Nutcracker, the Red-winged Starling, the Passenger Pigeon, the Esquimaux Curlew, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, the Great Auk or the Laughing Gull.

And its value has not been much diminished by his heavy editing of the entries that remain. For the Reverend F. O. Morris (1810-1893), sometime Commoner of Worcester College, Oxford, once he was happily settled in the living of Nunburnholme in the East Riding of Yorkshire (where he stayed for the rest of his life, and where he fathered three sons, six daughters, and twenty birds in natural history), wrote in the rectory drawing-room every evening, undisturbed by gossip, late night, piano-playing, or by importunate entries that remain. For the Reverend F. O. Morris (1810-1893), sometime Commoner of Worcester College, Oxford, once he was happily settled in the living of Nunburnholme in the East Riding of Yorkshire (where he stayed for the rest of his life, and where he fathered three sons, six daughters, and twenty birds in natural history), wrote in the rectory drawing-room every evening, undisturbed by gossip, late night, piano-playing, or by importunate entries that remain. 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## Liking thyself

Mary Warnock

MIRIAM STOPPARD:

Everywoman's Life-Guide  
447pp. Macmillan. £9.95.  
0 356 08588 0

At first sight, there are two things against Miriam Stoppard's big book. The first is probably not her fault. We are told in the blurb that being and staying healthy, for a woman, means "being able to cope". Now for my generation, the word "cope" was a new word. "I expect Nanny will cope," my rich friends said when I begged that, just for one morning, they might look after one of my children for me. "You're so wonderful," others said. "I never know how you cope." It was coping that defeated us. It was a constant preoccupation. It is depressing to hear that, twenty years later, our counterparts are still trying to cope.

But I doubt whether Miriam Stoppard herself would have chosen that depressing expression, so suggestive of a world without love, certainly without pleasure. She is altogether too jolly and confident.

The second objection against the book is that it is too like a jumble colour supplement, especially designed for women. It is true, but with just the right mix of letter-press, diagrams and really rather beautiful photographs, though, happily, in black and white.

All the same it is a good book; and certainly one that will be widely read. Anyone with daughters who can read will do well to buy it and leave it lying about. Children will do themselves nothing but good if they sneak up to it while their parents are out and read the bits about sex, marriage, and the photographs. And the reason why girls, especially, will do themselves good is because the whole emphasis of the book is on confidence and self-esteem, at whatever age you are. The message is "Like thyself".

In some ways it is easier to like yourself than to know yourself: you

don't need paroxysms of sincerity to achieve it; indeed undue honesty may be thought a hindrance. Nevertheless it is, as Miriam Stoppard well knows, of the utmost importance, if you are to live an enjoyable life, to be on good terms with yourself, and to be quite pleased with what you see when you look in the mirror in the mornings. It is the mixture of everyday advice about health and good looks with unprofound but sensible psychological encouragement that makes this book a comfort to read.

To the analytic it may appear that Miriam Stoppard has an unresolved and ambiguous attitude to some areas of her subject-matter. On the key subject of femininity itself, she admits her problem. She finds that she cannot reconcile the intellectual appreciation of the equality of men and women, her awareness of the powerful forces of social conditioning on girls, with her feeling that she wants to be as she has been brought up to be. This honesty about her own attitudes is a particularly encouraging aspect of the book. When approaching the section on sexual behaviour she admits to extreme difficulty amounting to distaste, in writing about sexual "techniques", because in real life that isn't what sex is like at all. When writing about the working mother, she lapses shamelessly into an autobiographical account of her own feelings of guilt about her children. But personal confession increases the universal appeal of what she says. We are drawn into a kind of sympathy quite absent when we read more didactic, quasi-scientific works.

But the ambiguity leads her to one serious failure. She never really discusses the nature of non-marital sexual relations. In talking about sex, she is careful always to refer to the "partner", not the "husband". She runs through possible choices in life, including the choice not to get married, or to be a lesbian, and also discusses different methods of contraception. But she never really tackles the historical issue of the difference that the pill has made to the way that women live. This is partly because she is cautious about the

pill, giving equal weight to other forms of contraception. Though this may be medically admirable, it underplays the sociological significance of the new attitude to contraception. Before the pill people had to go to great lengths to find out where there was a Marie Stopes Clinic and once there, they were often asked when they intended to get married. It is different today.

Another failure is that the book is not explicit about the emotional horrors that can accompany marriage. Miriam Stoppard of course admits that marriages break down, and she gives the familiar statistics. But she does not discuss the rage or positive hatred that may precede the breakdown of a marriage, or indeed continue with it; and this is a thing, quite serious omission. It is no good being honest and frank and confidence-boosting about women's sexuality unless you are equally sure about their frequent bad feelings, resentment and anger. Of course men feel the same things, but that is not her problem.

Mrs Stoppard is first and foremost a doctor; and if she is not all that subtle on the emotions, she is especially excellent, as a former practising dermatologist, on all matters related to the skin. She is scathing about the alleged virtues of face-packs, and the cosmetic manufacturers' claims for deep-cleansing and other mysterious powers. She explains how harmful exposure to the sun, and excessive soap and water, are to the skin, and how various diets may affect it. But with all this realism and knowledge, she is greatly in favour of make-up (and particularly for those suffering from spots). Not only is all this comforting, it also carries weight. At this point we believe her, because she speaks as a professional.

In some respects Miriam Stoppard is the Marie Stopes of our time. For, like Marie Stopes, she has her romantic side. Sex and love are, rightly, confounded. But in her case, we are convinced that this arises from theory, but straight from experience. And therefore her book, half encyclopaedia, half autobiography, is a nice encouraging read.

## Healing thyself

J. F. Watkins

TONY SMITH (Editor):

The Macmillan Guide to Family Health  
832pp. Macmillan. £14.95.  
0 333 27870 4

The great moments in a reviewer's life come when he is called upon to review the almost unreviewable. It is then that the task becomes a challenge comparable to cycling up the North Face of the Eiger. Unreviewable in question is the only one, or the best, of its kind. How can one review the Bible, or the Manual of Infantry Training, or the London Telephone Directory, for example?

The Macmillan Guide to Family Health is unquestionably the best manual of body maintenance and repair that has ever been produced. It weighs 4 lbs 10 oz, measures 9½ x 7½ x 2½ inches, and contains 832 pages. It was composed by twenty-seven doctors, two science writers, and an editorial team of sixteen, led by the Medical Correspondent of *The Times*, and their names are all given in the list of credits. It has four sections. Part I deals with the Healthy Body and how to keep it healthy. Part II deals with self-diagnosis, mainly in a series of splendid flow diagrams which guide the sufferer, or the delighted hypochondriac, to a preliminary diagnosis. Thus, if you have painful ankles your answers may lead you to a diagnosis of sprain, or fracture, or gout, and so on. These charts solve the old problem met by everyone who loves to browse in books with titles like *Home Doctor*, namely, how to avoid the awful conviction that one is suffering simultaneously from at least four kinds of cancer, and several deadly infectious diseases.

This state of mind will, on the other hand, be brought on by Part III, which describes in plain language diseases, disorders, and other problems, classified by the system involved and also alphabetically. It is for the effects of reading this section that the flow charts provide an immediate antidote. Part IV gives practical advice on caring for the sick. Every page has excellent, clear illustrations, which, like the text, are totally accurate. They are even more accurate, since some of the patients are given dark faces. There is one slightly worrying illustration, however, to which it is my painful duty to draw attention. On page 606 there is a drawing of sexual intercourse occurring "between a man and a woman", as the text puts it. Neither party to the transaction seems to be showing much enjoyment, but that is not the point. At £15 a time private ownership of this book will be confined to members of the upper middle class, the landed aristocracy and reviewers, who have to consider constantly the moral welfare of their servants and children. They will have to decide whether to tear out the

page in question before placing the volume on the coffee-table in the lounge.

What is the place of this compilation in Contemporary European Thought? As part of the library of a great house, or in the reference section of the local Carnegie Library the book will be of great use to the family. Does the butler suffer from hallucinations? Turn to Chart 22, question 1: "Have you noticed one or more of the following symptoms... generalised confusion... agitated behaviour... signs of physical illness?" If the answer is yes, the instruction is "Call your doctor now! This may be delirium. See Chart 15 (Confusion)". Many of us occasionally twitch and tremble. Chart 13 can reassure us that we may be afflicted by nothing worse than mild caffeine poisoning and need no more drastic remedy than a few hours without tea or coffee. Difficultly in breathing? Chart 41 will enable us to distinguish readily between Anxiety and Pneumococcal pneumonia. Chart 65 leads us unerringly through eleven causes of Painful Leg and, like all the charts, directs us to the doctor if we cannot make a diagnosis. Just as the principal function of a general practitioner is to tell his patients what they are not suffering from, so these charts will help to allay much needless anxiety, and now and again may save a life. They make the book essential to Master Mariners sailing without a ship's surgeon.

Novelists and playwrights will find Part III the most useful section. There are few things which cause more annoyance to members of the medical profession than inaccurate descriptions of the diseases which writers inflict upon their characters. Dickens was a serious offender in this respect. The death of Little Nell, for example, appears to have been caused by some rare tropical disease, like Lassa Fever, which is an epidemiological absurdity before the invention of the aeroplane. Other writers are also guilty. If Job had been as severely smitten with boils as his biographer claims he would almost certainly have died of septicaemia. King Lear's temporary (and understandable) hysterical psychosis should not have resulted in his death. He may, however, have died quite unnecessarily, of superimposed hypothermia. In the world of opera, any doctor could have told Puccini that a woman dying of tuberculosis could not sing loudly enough to be heard even in the first row of the stalls. From now on we shall be spared these solecisms if only creative writers will take the trouble to look up the facts. A spy, for example, could be captured because of an attack of tenosynovitis which prevents him from pulling the trigger of his revolver. A great violinist could be put temporarily out of action by a frozen shoulder, and so on.

This book, in short, is for everyone. It will continue to give pleasure, instruction, and reassurance as the centuries unroll.

Other reference books recently published include:

*The Anagram Dictionary* by Michael Curt. 248pp. Robert Hale. £7.95. 0 7091 9674 1

*The Dictionary of Anagrams* by Samuel C. Hunter. 266pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £6.95. 0 7100 9006 4

*The Price Guide to Antique Silver* by Peter Waldron. 362pp. Antique Collectors' Club. £19.50. 0 907462 08 1

*The Europe Year Book 1982: A World Survey* Volume II. International Organizations, Europe, Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. 1,888pp. 0 905118 71 3. Volume III. Countries outside Europe from Cameroon to Zimbabwe. 1,888pp. 0 905118 72 9. Europa Publications. £80 the set.

*The Illustrated Guide to Modern Life* by Werner de Haas and Freddy Koenig. 350pp. Harold Starke. £8.95. 0 287 00056 6

*The Natural History of the Mediterranean* by Teymyn Harris. 244pp. Pelham Books. £7.95. 0 7207 1391 9

*The Illustrated Guide to Molluscs* by Horst Janz. 180pp. Harold Starke. £7.45. 0 287 00055 8

*National Parks and Reserves of Western Europe* by Eric Duffey. 288pp. Macdonald. £14.95. 0 356 08586 4

*The Book of Political Quotes* by Jonathan Green. 246pp. Angus and Robertson. Paperback. £5.95. 0 207 14569 5

*Dictionary of Trade Name Origins* by Adrian Room. 217pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.95. 0 7100 0839 2

*The Book of Whales* by Richard Ellis. 202pp. Robert Hale. £14.95. 0 7091 9761 6

*World View 1982: An Economic and Geographical Yearbook* 312pp. Philip. Paperback. £5.95. 0 86104 367 7

## LITERARY CRITICISM

MARILYN FRENCH:

Shakespeare's Division of Experience  
376pp. Cape. £12.50.  
0 224 02013 7

SMON SHEPHERD:

Amazon and Warrior Women:  
Varieties of Feminism in  
Seventeenth-Century Drama  
234pp. Brighton: Harvester. £22.50.  
0 85227 353 4

IRENE G. DASH:

Wooling, Wedding, and Power:  
Women in Shakespeare's Plays  
256pp. Columbia University Press.  
\$29.25.  
0 231 05238 3

PATRICIA MONAGHAN:

Women in Myth and Legend  
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The value of any work of literary criticism depends not on its theoretical position but on the talent and perceptiveness of its author. This truth is asserted afresh by a comparison of these four works of feminist criticism, which resemble each other in approach and overlap in subject-matter. One is brilliant, one is interesting but suggestive, and two are more or less worthless. The outstanding book is *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* by Marilyn French. It seems to me the finest piece of feminist criticism we have yet had, its central argument is that Shakespeare offers us a threefold division of experience, first into masculine and feminine, and then, by a subdivision of the latter, into "inward" and "outward" feminine. The masculine principle, predicated on the ability to kill, is the role of power-in-the-world. It is associated with progress and ownership, with physical courage, assertiveness, authority, independence and the right, rights, legitimacy. It erects permanent structures, it values action over feeling, thought over sensation. The outward feminine is associated with "darkness, chaos, flesh, the sinister, magic, and above all sexuality". "Measure of all sorts", claims French, "but especially sexual pleasure" is a threat to the masculine principle. The inward feminine is founded on the ability to give birth, and includes "nurturiveness, compassion, mercy and the ability to create fiction...". It exerts its influence above the individual, telling over action, sensation over thought. It expresses the benevolent aspects of nature, and the prime example of it is the chaste and constant heroine.

French's view of Shakespeare's development is that he began by accepting legitimacy, and so the masculine principle; in his middle comedies he devotes more attention to constancy, and so to the inward feminine. The outward feminine is savage, rejected, a rejection seen in the social disgust of the problem plays (which, she rather surprisingly claims, is continued to the end of his career). Only in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the outward feminine treated, with sympathy, as the Shakespearean realized that the threats to harmonious life could come from either pole, his deepest horror was not only by uncontrolled nature but by corruption, the transient and the unfixed. His questioning of legitimacy, and so of the uncontrolled masculine principle, is intellectual and restrained compared with his horrified rejection of the outward feminine.

Not until virtually the last page of her book does French tell us (the day is highly effective rhetorically) that her concern is not merely with Shakespeare, that she believes the degradation of moral qualities with the degradation of the human condition, that she believes that the human condition should be remade, and in particular that, whereas for Shakespeare the greatest threat may have lain in nature, it may lie in control: she therefore condemns "an antithesis against the

almost total dedication to masculine values that characterizes our culture".

Within this structure, French has elaborated some subtle and profound insights. The quality of scholarship is high (and the discussion of other critics, though thorough, conveniently left in the notes), and on almost every play she has something illuminating to say. She is much better on the tragedies than on the comedies, if only because she is clearly more interested in them, and treats them at greater length. The sections on *Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Antony* are especially rich. On *Lear* she points out that the way the concept "nature" is used characterizes the user (a useful reversal of the usual point), and both how the play is concerned with the dangers of the unregulated masculine principle, and with the more intensely horrifying danger of women who attempt to exercise masculine power, and who, because they violate the feminine must be accused of unregulated sexuality. On *Antony* her interpretation is fairly orthodox (very hostile to Caesar), deals judiciously with the relation of the play's values to moral principles, and very shrewdly points out that in Cleopatra Shakespeare shows a sympathy for unlawful feminine sexuality that he shows nowhere else, whereas in Octavia he judges a feminine ideal that he had earlier accepted without question. *Macbeth* is perhaps better suited than any other play to her approach, since its value scheme is quite explicitly concerned with gender differences (hence the harping on manliness). Since in it, Scotland's hero-culture is based on killing, the difference between legitimate and illegitimate killing is crucial, and this difference seems in fact to be much less perceptible than the moral scheme based on legitimacy would claim. *Macbeth* should not therefore be seen as a tragedy of ambition (aspiring to the illegitimate), but as a play about the relation between manliness and feeling. The orthodox interpretation is too glibly dismissed, but that which is substituted for it is richly suggestive.

I have some central objections to raise against the general thesis of *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*. French's interpretation of Shakespeare's view of the masculine principle, but especially sexual pleasure, is a threat to the masculine principle. The inward feminine is founded on the ability to give birth, and includes "nurturiveness, compassion, mercy and the ability to create fiction...". It exerts its influence above the individual, telling over action, sensation over thought. It expresses the benevolent aspects of nature, and the prime example of it is the chaste and constant heroine.

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## Good and bad genders

Laurence Lerner

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limitation of stage conventions, but the fact that she discloses her love for Benedick. Some of French's tortured reasoning about constancy would be simplified if "love" and "sex" were not used as synonyms, or if it were admitted that what lago hates is sexual love rather than the feminine principle - as it is stated later in the essay. But it is page 214 before a contrast between love and appetite is explicitly admitted.

A different kind of omission is that of literary history. The concentration on Shakespeare is a legitimate (and common enough) strategy for a critic, but it is disappointing that there is so little awareness of the conventions lying behind the plays, and of the parallel activities of his predecessors and contemporaries. The discussion of *As You Like It* would be improved if it paid more attention to the ideas of pastoral, that of *Timon* (which is excellent) if it said more on the tradition of the misanthrope. That neither ignorance nor incompetence is responsible for this omission is clear from some pregnant *otiose dicta*, and an admirable page on Sidney and Spenser towards the end.

Simon Shepherd's *Amazon and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* goes to the other extreme. Its central concern is with dramatic conventions for the presentation of women, and the social significance of these, and virtually all the plays discussed are minor if not forgotten. This is admitted in the preface, which remarks "texts may be obscure when we have no way of making sense of them." If this is a claim that feminist perspectives may enable us to see new merit in forgotten works, it whets the appetite, but only to disappoint, for the discussions are not really concerned with establishing a new canon, nor, except to passing, with evaluation. There is also the tactical difficulty, that to read discussions of unfamiliar texts (which will be the experience of all but a tiny handful of *Amazon and Warrior Women* readers) is an odd experience. The quiring from the author expository skills and patience that Shepherd lacks. When one adds his occasional fondness for pithy colloquial sentences that often twist away into ambiguity or incoherence, it is clear that this is not an easy book to read. His use of terminology too is sometimes unhelpful, as when he seems to regard "sexuality" as a synonym for "sex-role" or "gender", and thus obscures a valuable distinction; or unconvincing, as in the case of "Amazon". He distinguishes Amazons from warrior women, claiming

that the term "comes to indicate a woman who uses her strength for non-virtuous, specifically lustful ends": a fascinating point, if true, yet even in the examples he quotes I counted as many uses that refute it as those that confirm it.

Yet *Amazon and Warrior Women* is lively and suggestive, with - for instance - a perceptive discussion of *Measure for Measure*, and an occasional observation that blends theatrical awareness and social significance, as in the remarks on balcony scenes in romantic drama: "Those scenes place the woman visually before us in a position where she is just outside the household that controls her, and yet above the ground, unable to reach the lover who promises sex, who has come over the garden wall."

The most striking word in Shepherd's title is "feminism". Most of us will be surprised to learn that there was a seventeenth-century feminism, and will wonder what extended or special use is being given to the term. The Introduction is an answer to a critic who asked "why couldn't substitute for the word antifeminist the word misogynist. Much of the book involves the crucial difference between the terms: a hatred for women is something civilized folk can dissociate themselves from; opposition to women's demands for their rights may not be. The cantankerous tone of this is, fortunately, not found in the book itself, but the substance of the point is not confirmed either, for the "feminists" of seventeenth-century drama are not concerned with women's rights in any sense of the term that Millicent Fawcett or Emily Davies would have recognized. The ways in which "the female force changes the male world", in many of the plays discussed, is by fulfilling traditional feminine roles. Take, for instance, the virgin martyrs, those victims of male lust and tyranny. (That lust and tyranny are related is, for Shepherd, important, for sex is related to politics; but he does not mention the dramatic convention that tragedies deal with the deaths of princes: the seducer or rapist is often a king because we are being shown tragedy, not because sexual equals political power - the poor and the oppressed are surely just as capable of lust and rape). Why do the virgin martyrs commit suicide? Shepherd says it as an affirmation of control over their own bodies. Augustine's view of the Lucretia story, that she should not have killed herself, because all killing is murder, and because the purity of the mind is not lost when the body is compelled, is

dismissed as being a male argument, irrelevant to the world as Lucretia experiences it. It would be truer to regard the insistence on suicide as a male argument; the loss of virtue is a scorching of the female body that damages it as a male property, and the true feminist position might be to leave the rapist and the incontinent husband to have their masculine argument, and make the best of her own situation. Survival is the truly radical course.

Irene G. Dash in *Wooling, Wedding and Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays* offers some unexpected interpretations of Shakespeare's plays by means of careful retelling of the stories ("We anxiously await Desdemona's entrance", and by refusing long-dead critics. She is well-informed about the eighteenth-century stage, and goes to enormous lengths to bring this in to her discussions, and to attribute interpretations of Shakespeare's plays by means of careful retelling of the stories ("We anxiously await Desdemona's entrance", and by refusing long-dead critics. She is well-informed about the eighteenth-century stage, and goes to enormous lengths to bring this in to her discussions, and to attribute interpretations of Shakespeare's plays by means of careful retelling of the stories ("We anxiously await Desdemona's entrance", and by refusing long-dead critics. 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## A foretaste of decline

Max Beloff

RICHARD CLARKE:

Anglo-American Economic Collaboration in War and Peace 1942-1949  
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0 19 828439 X

What one would expect from the title of this curious volume is a thorough examination of the many and important issues of a financial and economic nature in which the British and American governments were concerned from the time of Lend-Lease to that of the Marshall Plan and the creation of what became OECD. One would expect due account to be taken of the material and literature available on both sides of the Atlantic so that one could see how the change in the relative positions of the two countries was mirrored in the thinking of their leaders and in the policy issues to which such reflections gave rise.

What we get in fact is nothing of the kind, but a certain amount of material about some of the issues which will illuminate some aspects of the story for those already familiar with them and for access to the other principal sources. The book did not begin in this way; it was legitimately intended as the personal narrative of one of the participants in these transactions, but to our loss the writer of it, Sir Richard Clarke, died with the manuscript incomplete. Nor is it possible to know, even had he lived to complete it, whether he would have published it in anything like its present form. Few memoirs — even by civil servants — are composed of numbered paragraphs as though they were an official brief or minute.

In any event, what we have from the author's hand are four chapters only, each dealing with a single phase in the story: the efforts at matching American and British war production to meet the needs of the Alliance; the problem of how the war should be paid for — lend-lease and its aftermath; the much debated American loan in the autumn of 1945; and finally the financial crisis of 1947 and the antecedents of the Marshall Plan. The editor, Sir Alec Cairncross, a professional economist but one with experience as a civil servant during the same period and later, has added to the text an introduction, misleadingly styled a commentary, which corrects Clarke on one or two points, and gives some perspective to the treatment; he has also added his own comments on additional ones of his own which point to some of the other sources for studying the question and also, and more important, some selected memoranda of the period, mostly though not exclusively by Clarke himself, which in fact occupy more space than the unfinished memoir. Documents of this kind, showing how government policy was arrived at through the interaction of departments and personalities, are rarer in print in relation to financial policy than in respect of the more traditional issues of diplomacy, and they have an immediacy of impact which may well excite the determined and knowledgeable student to further historical inquiry and cogitation. Nevertheless this is not a book; neither the one Sir Richard might have written nor the one Sir Alec may yet write.

What can we derive from what we have here? Sir Richard Clarke, Otto Clarke to fellow mandarins, was best known in his later career as an authority on the machinery of government; his willingness to assist those seeking to understand how British government operates is one to which the present reviewer can testify with gratitude. He was an advocate of the creation of "Super-departments" and now that these are out of fashion or in some instances dismantled, his opinions are likely to seem less persuasive than they did. But it is clear that his whole interest in how things were done, as well as in what things were done, was stimulated by the machinery created in Whitehall and mirrored to some extent by Britain's

large-scale representation in wartime Washington — built staffed in large part by men drawn from outside the ranks of the civil service. (The book, which has no index, does have a useful list of *dramatis personae*.) It was also stimulated by what Clarke himself observed in Washington, where the US problems of co-ordination were much greater, where the civilian war effort was never organized on the same scale, and where in matters of production the supremacy of the military did not have to contend with strong civilian direction.

But machinery is only what is needed to tackle matters of substance. On the substantial issues arising in the areas within which he worked, Clarke had some penetrating historical insights, and these in turn were buttressed by an unusual ability to extract major truths from simple statistics — using figures not to numb reason but to propel argument. For the war years there are two such insights of particular relevance. The first was the need to adapt British thinking to the understanding that what had been "our" war was transformed in the latter half of 1941 into a world war, "in which we were a tremendously important unit, but no longer in control of decisions". Indeed in one sense the whole story is one of Britain's declining ability to make decisions of her own and of the rearguard action to try, by reducing commitments and mobilizing what strength we had, to make the decline as painless as possible.

The second major insight was the need in wartime to see beyond victory to the conditions of the post-war

world and to plan for it not inflexibly, since things might change but at least in the light of probabilities. What Clarke felt was that while the necessities of enlisting popular support for the war effort helped to direct attention to social aspects of post-war planning — Beveridge and all that — far less attention was being devoted to how Britain was going to earn the money to maintain its standard of living, let alone massively improve the lot of the people. Why Britain's share of the world market had been declining even before the war, how British industry could reverse the trend by becoming more export-minded, what room there was for import-substitution, notably in agriculture — all these questions that have haunted British governments ever since were present to Clarke in the midst of all the turmoil of wartime financial negotiations.

Clarke clearly differed from some of his colleagues and seniors in displaying a certain scepticism on two major aspects of what was the current orthodoxy during and just after the war. He was much more prone to believe that the essentials of the post-war economic problem lay in the need to get production restarted or revived, and that barriers to trade in the form of tariffs and so forth were less important than the actual level of what could be produced and the supplies of food, raw materials and energy to make this productive effort possible. He was therefore less dogmatically committed than some to getting rid of all elements of discrimination in trade and payments. A dollar shortage for most countries would be inevitable for a long time and it was their right to protect

themselves against its effects by commodity action where this was possible.

But one must expect the United States to see things from a different point of view and recognize the internal impediments to the kind of policies of enlightened self-interest to which economic logic might be expected to subscribe. Clarke's point of view was thus less optimistic than that of Keynes (for whom he nevertheless had a deep admiration) and he was more prepared to say that if we could not get financial assistance on terms that we thought would assist us to a permanent recovery, we were net compelled by the lack of any alternative to accept whatever the Americans were prepared to offer. As the narrative and documents make plain there was an alternative scenario which would involve arrangements not only with the countries of the Commonwealth but also with France, Holland, Belgium and their empires. For those who looked at the country's problems from the point of view of its economic burden, it seemed clear that it was everlastingly commitments, especially military commitments and the cost of "feeding the Germans", that were the main threats to achieving solvency. Yet withdrawal could clearly put in jeopardy the very empires upon whose resources recovery was in part to be based. The issue was not directly faced in any of the material here available, but it is hard to believe that someone as acutely aware of historical realities as Clarke failed to note it. What in retrospect he did feel had happened was that all Britain's ingenuity had gone into propping up the economic status quo and that we might have done better had we not been cushioned against

reality by the American loan on the terms that Keynes accepted.

The crisis of 1947 provided for both the British and the Americans a glimpse of the dangers which the world economy itself faced, and led to the new departure of the Marshall Plan, which was in a sense the way by which the Americans helped Europe to organize itself for its own independence. Although the book and documents end before the foundation of the EEC in the Schuman Plan, one can see foreshadowed the subsequent difficulties between Europe and its American protector, which in one form or another have been with us ever since.

Indeed the most interesting of the documents printed here are the last two. One is an examination by Clarke himself of the arguments for and against a European federation with British participation, leading to the conclusion that this was the wrong route and that it was to be combined action between America and the Commonwealth that we should look for our future safety and prosperity. The Americans had to be persuaded not to treat us as mere Europeans. Thus the Clarke of 1948 was looking at things rather differently from the Clarke of 1945. The final document is the minute of a discussion on these matters between the élite of the departments concerned with external policy, which broadly accepted Clarke's new diagnosis as a guide to action. A decade later one of those present, Mr (later Sir) Frank Lee became the spearhead of Whitehall's drive to get Britain into the Common Market. Not even mandarins can claim consistency.

they relate to international payments and finance and trade in what Davidson calls "non-monetary" and "unmonetized" money. "Non-monetized" money (NUMS) is when regional and national contracts are denominated in local monetary units, and international ones in other units; "unmonetized" money (UMS) is when the exchange rate is not expected to show substantial variability over the time during which current contracts are still binding. Two further chapters deal with international money and liquidity, and with the stability of the purchasing power of money.

This section fills rather more than half the book and much of it is suitable for specialist rather than general readers. There is a lot of interesting, indeed important material here, particularly as Davidson tries consistently to relate monetary phenomena to actions and events in the "real" economy, with its great variety of contractual obligations embodying expectations of a quantitative character. Though not always easy to follow (one has, inter alia, to

get used to Davidson's penchant for new abbreviations: in addition to NUMS and UMS, there are, for example, GE for general equilibrium, AO and NAO for available and non-available output, and SOS for shortage of savings) these chapters will repay careful study. Above all, they dispose of the broad simplification by which at least some schools of monetarism try to pre-empt what is essentially a complicated and difficult area of economic theory, if only because changes in actual institutions and practices are continually making simple categories inadequate.

The next chapter is virtually a short monograph on the impact of an OPEC cartel on the international monetary standard. Further special studies follow on Euro money, Role of International Corporations, Gold, and two which are organically linked with the preceding theoretical analysis: on the possibility of fixing wages in terms of an international standard and flexible exchange rates.

The final chapter is on "Coordinating International Payments and

## Photographs of my Uncle and Aunt in Old Age

Cigarette between his second  
And third finger, ah  
From a long tip giving up its ghost  
Before the brush-off,  
Still be its there  
Thirty years beyond the grave,  
A shroud of ecstasies  
Bandaging his head.

His temperate face on guard  
Between his earphones still keeps watch  
Above a dresser's mothballed  
Dungon of mahogany, though  
Once in the high glass tower  
She played Rapsunzel, letting down  
Her rayed Rapunzel, letting down  
Her rayed Rapunzel, letting down  
And random and intemperately gold.

John Mole

## More voices than one

M. V. Jones

ROBERT FEUER MILLER:

Dostoevsky and "The Idiot": Autlier, Karsner, and Reader  
266pp. Harvard University Press.  
1974.  
0 674 21490 0

ROBERT LOUIS JACKSON:

The Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes  
380pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £17.50.  
0 691 06484 9

Current interest in theories of reading and in narrative structure made it seem inevitable that before long an extended structural analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* would appear in print. Not long ago we were reading

Shostakovich's book on *The Devils* (Narrative Principles in Dostoevsky's "Bey"), itself strongly influenced by the methodological principles of Wolf Schmid's *Der Textaufbau in den Erzählungen Dostoevskijs*. Both these important books displayed an impressive theoretical apparatus and were laden with the sort of specialized vocabulary which causes some to rejoice for the future of literary studies and others to despair. But although Robert Feuer Miller is clearly aware of recent developments in critical theory, she is content to adopt a more modest, respectfully, to an appendix. Acknowledging that some aspects of Schmid's approach resemble her own, she seems to regard this fact as little more than a curiosity. Her own method, whatever criticisms may be levelled against it, turns out to be a modified form of Wayne Booth, and the result is a book which is eminently readable and a study of Dostoevsky's novel which will be generally welcomed.

The various voices of the narrator in *The Idiot* have long presented the attentive reader with apparently insoluble problems. Dr. Miller's

analysis of the four basic modes of narration within the novel is fascinating and more subtle than there is space to indicate here. She discerns the comic voice of the novel of manners, the Gothic voice of arbitrary disclosure and heightened terror, the voice of a sympathetic and omniscient narrator and a voice ironically detached and swayed by current rumours. Using a term given currency by Bakhtin, Dr. Miller sees these voices as evidence of "polyphony", stressing however, that they are carefully orchestrated by a single authorial consciousness. Adopting Booth's distinction between "real" and "implied" authors (with their corresponding "readers"), she adds to the scheme a "fictional narrator" and a "narrator's reader". The growing gap between the "implied author" and the "fictional narrator" as the novel progresses plays, she claims, a major role in Dostoevsky's rhetoric of persuasion.

This thesis turns out to be a convincing one. By the end of Part Two of the novel, the reader has acquired a trust in the fictional narrator; his various voices have matched the subject-matter. But at the same time the reader is aware that the narrator's voice does not coincide exactly with that of the implied author; the narrator's powers of reasoning sometimes seem deficient. The clouds of rumours out of which he occasionally generates his narrative do not always create the impression of an ironic, detached narrator, but rather at times reduce him to the status of a town gossip. His tendency to beg off providing information is often annoying because it is so obviously arbitrary.

In the third and fourth parts the reader's confidence is eventually undermined as he becomes confused by abrupt, unpermeated changes in the narrator's voice, and the narrator even apologizes for the problems inherent in writing novels and seems anxious to bring the fiction to an end. As he appears to lose control over his narrative the narrator also seems to lose sympathy for his hero,

Prince Myshkin. The reader becomes increasingly aware of the gap between fictional narrator and implied author; the narrator's reader goes on reading in a chronological and unreflective fashion, accepting Radomsky's criticisms of the prince and dismissing Myshkin's ravings about atheism and Roman Catholicism, while the implied reader reads more carefully, questioning Radomsky's views as shallow and seeing in the prince's monologue the logical climax of his stated beliefs. "The crucial point, however, is that the actual or real reader of the novel is concurrently both readers."

It is legitimate to ask, I think, exactly what is the relationship between any or all of these "readers" and the hundreds of thousands who have actually read the novel since its publication in 1868 and failed to discern what Dr. Miller describes. Netwithstanding her attempts at definition, the "real reader" seems at times to be more other than Dr. Miller herself. Yet if her model threatens to break down at this point, it is not I think a serious breakdown and the journey in her company is eminently worth while.

Integrated into her study are two valuable chapters on the "inserted narrative", which give Dr. Miller the opportunity to emphasize that though the orchestration of voices serves on one level to entertain, on another it endows with metaphysical significance Dostoevsky's conviction that the essence of things is ultimately inexpressible. That this idea does not radically subvert the fiction is due in part to the complementary conviction that the reader may be induced to share the author's intuition and to accompany him on the voyage of discovery.

In Robert Louis Jackson's view this voyage of discovery, or more precisely "the law of striving for the ideal", is what for Dostoevsky gave meaning to life. Jackson's place in Dostoevsky studies is already secure and *The Art of Dostoevsky* is the fruit of some thirty years of study and reflection on the Russian novelist.

His best-known book on Dostoevsky was published in 1966 under the title *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*. This new book is not, as he puts it, "marked by any particular established approach or methodology" and owes much to the "metaphysical" and ontologically oriented group of Russian critics Vladimir Solov'yov, Vasily Rozanov, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Nicholas Berdyaev, Lev Shestov, Paul Evdokimoff and others. It also, understandably, owes much to Jackson's own previous work, particularly that on Dostoevsky's aesthetics. He holds that in his fiction Dostoevsky explores the interaction of three fundamental laws of nature, in addition to the egoistic and idealistic urges in men there is a third law — the law of striving for the ideal, which is, writes Jackson, "the moving center of Dostoevsky's aesthetic and religious outlook; it is the structuring law of his artistic universe and of the people who inhabit it."

It is legitimate to ask, I think, exactly what is the relationship between any or all of these "readers" and the hundreds of thousands who have actually read the novel since its publication in 1868 and failed to discern what Dr. Miller describes. Netwithstanding her attempts at definition, the "real reader" seems at times to be more other than Dr. Miller herself. Yet if her model threatens to break down at this point, it is not I think a serious breakdown and the journey in her company is eminently worth while.

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Little is learnt about the great writer; our acquaintanceship with him hardly goes beyond the glimpse of the elderly, balding father with his tennis-court. But Tolstoy's presence looms throughout the book's four sections. His heritage is borne unashamedly by his daughter as a patriotic nurse on two Russian fronts from 1914 onwards. A determined but frustrated attempt is made after the Revolution to maintain a Tolstoyan nest at her father's estate of Yasnaya Polyana. The long years of self-exile after 1929, in Japan and America, are filled with lectures and writings about her father (her publications are listed in an appendix) and meetings with his admirers and devotees, Tolstoyans. Tolstoy, "the purpose of my own life", gave Alexandra her living as well as her reason for living.

But however dutiful a daughter she proved to be, Alexandra's own self — personality, was — never eclipsed by her father's memory. She engages our attention with vivid, snapshot-like memories. This introductory photographs are a forerunner of this technique. So famine and hunger are not subject to retrospective analysis; but into sharp focus come momentary recollections — on a Moscow bridge people scoop up molasses from a spilt barrel; in Vladivostok a foreigner irreverently kicks a bag of beans destined for export; the thrill of throwing away food — rice, cheese, corn — a Japanese ship. Our impression is of turning the pages of a family album; past events are not ordered, but memories are selected for their private significance. For the cataclysms in which she participated there is a careless disdain, reflected perhaps in the inaccuracy of the two First World War military maps, one of which describes the Battle as "Atlantic Ocean" and the other displaces Georgia into Armenia. That Tolstoyan disdain was possibly inherited from her father.

Yet the horrors of mechanized warfare, genocide in Turkey, gassing in Belorussia, were all experienced

his thesis that *Notes from the House of the Dead*, often regarded as the least typical of Dostoevsky's works, introduces themes and experiences which are fundamental to the mature novels and serves as a tragic metaphor of the human condition in a meaningless world. Its links with *Notes from Underground* are well brought out. Four chapters take *Notes from the House of the Dead* as their starting-point, and although there are brief discussions of themes in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, all the other chapters are devoted to shorter works: "The Peasant Marey", "The Gambler", "A Gentle Creature", "A Boy of Christ's Christmas Party", "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" and "Bobok".

Jackson abandons the well-worn tourist routes through Dostoevsky's canon and his leisurely and unpretentious exploration of lesser-known areas offers some unfamiliar and sometimes surprising viewpoints. This book will be particularly welcome to those who have long wanted to know how Jackson would link his analysis of Dostoevsky's aesthetics to a reading of his fiction.

Jackson's reading of Dostoevsky is not therefore radically new. What is unusual about his approach is that he concentrates chiefly upon texts and topics which are rarely given much space in extended monographs on Dostoevsky. Particularly notable is

At worst this inherited sense of station could be blinding snobbery. She recalled with Tolstoyan candour her attitude in 1916 to a fellow medical officer, Michael Frunze, who would later succeed Trotsky as War Commissar; with the unremembrance of face of an insignificant person he was "not accepted in the society", "not one of us". But her standing allowed her to speak her mind to Kalinin, an undoubted social inferior although Head of State, and meant that within months of political imprisonment she would be recycling up to the Kremlin with a project for Yasnaya Polyana. Stalin, too, who allocated funds to celebrate Tolstoy's jubilee in 1928, is intuitively placed as a "non-commissioned officer in the Tsar's guard" who knows how to behave to a lady. Here is another vivid snapshot. "He was too polite for a Bolshevik. As I was leaving, he rose again and escorted me to the door."

After the jubilee, Alexandra left for a lecture tour of Japan and exile. On her arrival she had a feeling which left a permanent imprint on her. In the bustle of the Japanese port, everyone belonged to recognized categories, except herself. She was now outside life. And so the theme of her Japanese period is a quest for a new status in life that explains her fascination for the ceremonial of Japanese culture. There are vignettes of tea-drinking ceremonies, traditional fishleg with cornmeal, the shy face of a young descendant of the samurai, and there is the awareness of the awkwardness of her displaced "big European body".

She felt displaced again when, after two years, she moved to the America of the Depression, where she despised at the widespread sympathy among intellectuals for the Revolution, and where "the Roosevelt proved much less amenable to her standing than had Kalinin and Stalin. Eventually she did discover a new and enduring role by helping to establish in 1935 the Tolstoy Foundation, one of whose aims was to aid refugees to integrate in their new communities without sacrificing their cultural traditions. One of its beneficiaries must have been Alexandra Tolstoy, who now threw her energies into the unforseen but huge task of resettling Russian refugees. When she died in the Tolstoy Foundation Nursing Home forty years later, in September 1979, she had seen to it that her father's will in some measure had been done.

## Laughter through tears

Donald Fanger

RICHARD PEACE:

The Enigma of Gogol  
An Examination of the Writings of N. V. Gogol and Their Place in the Russian Literary Tradition  
344pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£22.50.  
0 521 23824 2

The enigma of Gogol, proclaimed and fostered by the writer himself, persists on at least three levels: the biographical, the textual, and the critical. About his temperament and his life we have enough information to construct hypotheses, but not, in most cases, enough to confirm them. As for the fiction and plays that won Gogol early recognition as a writer of genius, readers continue to find themselves perplexed by the way he writes exterior that recognizes while baffling all attempts to account for it. Inadequate or commensurate terms; an obscure sense of profundity haunts these plotless pages teeming with incomplete characters, trivial details, mysterious ironies: there seems to be more to them (as Shklovsky remarks of the characters of *Dead Souls*) than what they are. It was natural that early critics should have met the problem by imputation; only in our own century has the literary nature of Gogol's art been subjected to efforts to discover the principles of coherence and meaning peculiar to it.

Richard Peace mentions these problems at the beginning and end of his new book, but with a certain diffidence; despite its title, this is not a book written to test a method or a method. In his preface the author seems to equate "critical points of view" with "critical monothemism" — a position he sketches and to observe almost with regret that "inevitably certain concepts will recur" in the pages that follow.

The two concepts advanced in the introductory chapter are "medievalism", broadly construed, and "laughter through tears". Peace, following Dmitri Likhachev, argues that Gogol's literary sensibility is anachronistic, expressive of what he sees as Russia's "ritualistic", "non-humanist" and "non-compassionate" Christianity; Gogolian laughter seeks to chastise rather than to reconcile, to uphold "the values of society at the expense of the individual". (How this accords with Gogol's passionate romantic aestheticism, scarcely mentioned, is not clear.) As for the conventional, the formula comes from Pushkin: "he was taken up by Gogol himself — these are made to conform for the ideology of Sentimentalism, a late eighteenth-century importation from the West which heralded a new orientation towards the inner world of the individual."

In his conclusion Mr Peace takes these generalizations a step further, finding that "laughter for Gogol also has an intensely private function" and that "the 'medieval' features of Gogol's writing are in fact a vehicle of expression for his non-rational personality", for his "private obsessions" or "voices". This theory of a "negative reconciliation with reality", wherein the writer makes his works a kind of code can have held meaning for generations of readers. Peace's answer is that Gogol's self-therapeutic laughter was directed at sexual fears, concern about identity and status, and anxiety about art and writing — the fears and the concern, at least, presumably touching common human experience.

Because Gogol was in this paradoxical sense, his first Russian writer to "explore the neurotic personality",

he may be seen to have "opened the way for the intense interest in psychology so characteristic of the Russian novel". His place in the Russian tradition, one of the main themes of *The Enigma of Gogol*, is handled largely in such summary terms (with the exception of Gogol's debt to his admirers and devotees, Narayana, of which Peace gives the most useful account in English). The issues it involves go unremarked, as do even the names of that constellation of twentieth-century prose writers whose works show the Gogolian influence at its largest and most direct: Belyi, Remizov, Solobov, Khlebnikov, Zamyatin, Olesha, Zoshchenko, Platonov, Bulgakov.

If Gogol's afterlife in Russian literature and in the best Russian criticism is incompletely registered here (one looks in vain for references to Annensky, Bakhtin, Chizhevsky, Gukovsky, Mann, or Sinyavsky), it may be because the real centre of Peace's interest is that examination of the writings stressed in his subtitle. Here one finds a number of acute observations; eg, that in *Mirgorod*, "the ambiguity at the heart of each story stems in large measure from the presence within it of themes from the other stories, occurring as dissonant overtones to the dominant note". Suggestive comments are made about the social implications of many of Gogol's works — an unfashionable subject in most Western criticism, but a useful one when accompanied by a recognition that there is always something which undermines the serious impact of this social criticism". A strong case is made for the precocious modernity of Gogol's theatrical practice in *The Government Inspector*. Virtually all the critical texts come to be detailed scrutiny, and even the most dedicated Gogolian, as he reads, will find himself registering new details, pondering new patterns, and confronting afresh the riddle of this endlessly elusive master.

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## On the Thirties trail

Patricia Craig

PETER DICKINSON:

The Last House Party  
222pp. Bodley Head. £6.95.  
0 370 30477 2

Peter Dickinson's characters are adept at playing games, possibly because they live in little else. It isn't only the Snailwood men, in his latest novel, who "become partially stuck in their childhood"; we remember the lady devoted to her rockery, the butterfly-collector and the train enthusiast of *A Summer in the Twenties*. The adults' plying things, to be sure, are objects of charm and intricacy, like the extraordinary clock with its full complement of carved figures, milkmaids, animals, seasons and so forth, that enchants the guests

at Snailwood Castle. The novels play games too: *The Last House Party* initiates a detecting game, with the reader set on to spot clues, make deductions, assess possibilities. The characters are assembled from various literary sources. Zena, Countess of Snailwood, is one of those typical 1930s hostesses who become famous simply by indulging every trait to its fullest extent; she has also manufactured for herself a Balkan past, entirely fictitious, which suits the persona she chooses to assume. Vincent and Harry, twin cousins, and Zena's nephews by marriage, are rather like a couple of Buchan heroes (on the surface at any rate); uncharismatic and assured, not too far from childhood and still involved in its engrossing rituals, united by bonds which include a common distrust for aunts (their own mothers not excepted), some of whom are

reputedly as formidable as any in P. G. Wodehouse. Lord Snailwood, the old buffer whose second wife Zena is, feels for his roses and his gadgets something of what Lord Ensworth felt for his pig. A recalcitrant handyman, a Beljamesque tennis girl, an Arab prince, all Eastern intensity and public school insouciance ("He is an enemy of my people, Masham. I say, this car makes a remarkable amount of smoke"), a Jewish professor and his cellist wife are also among the cast, and reinforce the impression of a piece of 1930s genre fiction - not about the period, but of the period.

It's an illusion, of course. Peter Dickinson shows a certain effort in presenting these preposterous types seriously, and a certain laxity in failing to get to grips with the political issues he raises (Snailwood's last house-party, which takes place in the summer of 1937, is arranged by Zena, who goes in for political games, to settle the Palestine question); but his new novel is nevertheless both complex and entertaining. In it, the thriller-writer's method is nipped with the social historian's and the ironist's concerns. The novel is very carefully constructed, with events of the past and the present set out in alternate chapters. As in conventional detective fiction, there is a violent deed at the centre - not the standard bloodless murder of the usual fictional house-party, but a truly distressing act: a sexual assault on a child. There are several candidates for the part of the culprit here, and one of them, as a consequence, undergoes vicissitudes as improbable as anything concocted by Edgar Wallace.

There is plenty to divert the reader - jokes, red herrings, amorous interludes, elaborate set-pieces. The novel plays so skilfully with the idea of artifice that it is difficult, in the end, to decide whether to read it as a fairly straightforward high-class thriller, or as the last of the country-house spoof.

ual abatement and sadism is rather like the problem of writing about boredom - you may escape being boring, but you end up with cheap pornography and violence. Certain of Renée's sexual encounters read like a ludicrously bad pastiche of *The Story of O*, and it is hard to take as seriously Renée's decline into madness as he beats stray dogs to death in the alleys of the city. When he would pick the bones free of flesh, tidily, more delicately than if he had rubbed along the marrow with a cloth of poison or yellow ochre, then he carried the brute home... upstairs... and put him to bed". This attempt to evoke subconscious urges through descriptions of heavily symbolic dreams results in similar excesses. The best sections of the book, in which Wynne avoids both the "atmospheric" writing and the leaden retrospection he uses elsewhere, are the retrospective passages where the adolescent and childhood for experiences on which to blame their present unhappiness - particularly disputes with siblings, parents and figures of authority.

The book begins and ends with an apparently unplanned suicide. The author's challenging aim seems to be to show that there is, in fact, no such thing as "mindless violence", whether directed towards the self or towards others. Each aggressive act is the result of a long cycle of action and reaction, continued through generations. The danger of such a deterministic view is that within the fiction it weakens dramatic tension, while outside the world of the novel it implies an alarming belief in subconscious collusion - is a brutal, unprovoked assault upon Renée's exonerated because she is a self-confessed masochist who habitually lets herself be abused?

*Crime Wave* is an ambitious first novel, an attempt to analyse the drive to self-destruction that is weakened by a crude underpinning of Freudian, Jungian and environmentalist theories and some patchy writing.

## Denizens of the Dove

Jennifer Uglow

JOHN WYNNE:

Crime Wave  
203pp. John Calder. £6.95.  
0 866 76 000 8

*Crime Wave* is about personal and social sado-masochism. The plot is merely a series of devices which allows John Wynne to describe several relationships demonstrating different combinations and proportions of dominance and subordination. The hero, Jake Adams, is a New York photojournalist, and is directed by his friend Reggino, an ex-policeman, towards the Hotel Dove, a brothel patronized by the city police, which may provide a news story as it is the centre of a local wave of robberies. There he meets Renée Cloverman; they have an affair, and when he goes on an assignment to Colorado he sends her to stay with his sister's family in the country. While Jake is away Renée and Reggino are left bored and disconsolate, brooding on the cruelties of their past and the meaninglessness of the present. When he returns and spurns their dependency their lives collapse entirely.

The novel is constructed around a roughly balanced quartet. There are two lovers; Renée, whose sense of humiliation is expressed in abject sexual subservience, and Reggino whose sense of impotence at work and with women is transformed into an obsession with weapons and violence. Set against them are two types of winner: Jake, whose curiosity and desire for possession are rendered harmless to himself by his cool ability to withdraw from any engagement which threatens to overwhelm him, and the family of Jake's sister Elia Scotchman. Their adherence to the mores of suburban domesticity allows them to survive, if only for the present, the chaos latent in the family and unleashed by Renée's presence. The difficulty of writing about sex-

## Midwestern Africa

Stephen Brook

JOHN STOCKWELL:

Red Sunset  
360pp. Gollancz. £8.50.  
0 573 03126 3

In recent years major novelists such as Updike and Naipaul have painstakingly created African countries in which to set their fiction. The action of John Stockwell's *Red Sunset* takes place in Burundi, a beautiful but impoverished real country in the heart of Africa. As a former CIA agent who controlled the Angola task force, he ought to know what he's writing about, yet the elaborate fictional republics of Naipaul and Updike have a greater ring of truth than the bluntly naturalistic Burundi portrayed here.

There is landscape in Stockwell's country, and there is a cast of diplomats, a police chief, bandits, beautiful women, and loyal servants, but they are all props. The American oil executives and the Russian diplomats express their opposed, though occasionally overlapping, ideologies, and there are brief ruminations about Africa before and after independence, but this novel isn't an exotic political thriller or a Graham Greene-style entertainment. In spite of its setting, it's pure Midwestern corn.

Natalie, a beautiful American unhappily married to a drunken executive, falls in love with a Russian diplomat. Sad to say it is clear that their love is doomed from the start. Her passion changes her - literally, it seems: she "felt a warm thrill" of excitement run through her body, flushing her cheeks and deepening the brown of her eyes. Their love blossoms as Alexis coaches Natalie in preparation for the ordeal by chess which forms the climax of the book. For on her first social appearance in Burundi, Natalie is insulted, in a thoroughly im-

probable scene, by a South African ex-Nazi banker. His gross attempts to humiliate her in public prompt to intervention by the assorted diplomats and businessmen of the cowed European community who are present, so she asserts herself by challenging him to a public game of chess a month later.

A chess game, however, is a poor device for a climax. Either the author has to waste time explaining the rules and the implications of the moves, or he has to assume that the reader is familiar with the game. Stockwell tries to have it both ways, and the scene falls even flatter than the rest of the book. While the game is in progress, another American couple with a teething marriage are fending off a murderous attempt to kidnap their daughter. Again improbably, the attempt fails.

Stockwell seems to feel more comfortable writing about restless middle-class Americans than depicting war-torn Africans. Apart from the good-natured servants, most of the Africans in *Red Sunset* are corrupt or vicious. The villainous Sergeant Ngandu goes in for apostrophes of this kind: "Ndi mukunona - I see you," he saluted the great lake, his voice heavy with scorn. "Mai manyi mubashi - waters of god piss." Bodies glisten with sweat, eyes roll, pain is unflinchingly endured: "His body had begun to quiver as adrenalin surged through his arteries, but anyone could see he wasn't afraid."

What is troubling is not that the writing is bad (although it is) but rather that it is lifeless. This is an adventure novel without much adventure, building to a climax without tension, injected with political reflections of utter predictability. The romances and the violence are weary routine; the setting is picture postcard. There is a blandness that makes one long for even a dash of vulgarity that would lend the book some panache or vigour.

## In the labyrinth of guilt

Michael Butler

MAX FRISCH:

Blaubart  
172pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM24.

Outwardly Max Frisch's new story suggests the dimensions of the conventional detective novel: Felix Schaad, a fifty-four-year-old doctor, has been falsely accused of the brutal murder of a call-girl, Rosalinde Togg, his former (and sixth) wife. However, the similarity ends; for, far from logically analyzing the stager which led to the crime and pursuing the identity of the true murderer, Frisch begins his tale with Schaad's acquittal for "want of evidence" and concentrates entirely on how he attempts to come to terms with this devastating judgment.

Although technically innocent, Schaad cannot in fact free himself of a debilitating sense of guilt which clearly originates not in a single error, but in a lifetime of defective personal relationships - not least with his numerous wives, the seventh of whom he is in the process of losing (like the rest, in divorce). Thus the "trial" of this ironic latter-day Bluebeard continues in his head as he recalls fragments of the cross-examination of disparate witnesses, adding to them dream-like confrontations with his dead parents and a final, spare but trenchant self-reflection in which the nature of guilt and personal inadequacy is fitfully illuminated.

Felix Schaad, whose very name suggests ironic contradiction, finds himself suspended like many previous Frisch protagonists in a capsule of timelessness from which no amount of distraction - solitary games of billiards, drinking bouts, walking, a trip to Japan - can liberate him. Deprived of his familiar

bourgeois routine - his patients have deserted him and he is forced to sell his practice - he can live only in the remembered words and gestures of his ex-wives, friends and acquaintances. What these "witnesses" reveal, however, is merely their own egocentricity, and a stubborn refusal to give up "their" image of Schaad. As in his previous story *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän* (1979), which *Blaubart* stylistically resembles, Frisch presents memory both as the key to individual perception, and as the single most important source of distortion.

*Blaubart* is a further subtle variation on the author's life-long obsession with the problem of identity and the fatal propensity of human beings

to thrust crippling definitions on each other. Frisch sketches with impressive economy the increasing isolation of a man forced to recognize with a mixture of horror and detachment the labyrinthine nature of guilt. A final abortive suicide attempt leaves Schaad anesthetized in a limbo of emotional impoverishment.

Despite the pared-down language - the tale is stripped to its essentials - a very humour informs *Blaubart* and effectively counterbalances the pessimism of its theme. And although Max Frisch can no longer avoid producing texts which are resonant of earlier achievements, this latest work demonstrates once again his skill in creating new and fascinating ways of exploring old truths.

## Raging anarchy

T. J. Binyon

KEN FOLLETT:

The Man from St. Petersburg  
292pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.  
0 241 10783 0

It is the summer of 1914. In response to Germany's war preparations England is desperately attempting to negotiate a treaty with Russia. An imperial emissary, Prince Alexei Orlov, comes to London, closely followed by Felix Kachinsky, a rabid anarchist, determined to assassinate Orlov and put an end to the talks. By one of those coincidences which make fiction almost as strange as truth the English representative at the negotiations, the Earl of Walden, is married to a Russian who is Orlov's aunt and was Kachinsky's mistress.

In his earlier, immensely successful thriller, Ken Follett, has written

chiefly about Nazi spies in the Second World War. Though here he moves back a war, there is a family resemblance between this book and the previous ones. As before the central figure is a fiercely independent loner, sexually irresistible, who bends women to his will and uses them to further his plans. And, as before, the sympathies of the author are split, going as much to the spy or the policeman. But there is a difference: *The Man from St. Petersburg* is much more of a historical novel. Action throughout takes second place to emotional and sexual entanglements, to complicated relations between husband and wife, lover and mistress, father and daughter.

And, although the end result is still exciting and very readable, it is a slight disappointment that the author should have chosen to abandon a genre he has made his own for one which many others have trodden before him.

## The virgin visitor

By Michael Hofmann

JOEL AGEE:

Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany  
314pp. Faber. £8.25.  
0 374 27958 6

Joel Agee, the son of the celebrated American writer, spent the years from eight to twenty - from just after the establishment of the German Democratic Republic to just before the building of the Berlin Wall - in East Germany with his mother, Alma, and her second husband, the German Communist writer, Bodo Uhse. These personal circumstances (and the author's pedigree) awaken expectations of a memorable fusion of autobiography and social history. Such a book might be analogous in importance and scope to the testimony of the sole, highly qualified survivor of some disaster.

The fact that these expectations are disappointed is intimately related to the nature of book and author. From his vantage-point as a "successful failure", as he is described by Dwight Macdonald, Joel Agee shows a particular sympathy with adolescence. And it is the traits typical of adolescence - rebelliousness, alienation, self-centredness, delusion, incoherence - which tend to relegate the social setting to a grey unimportance. The focus of *Twelve Years* is an intensely autobiographical text that the background is blurred, even eclipsed. The book's sub-title, "An American Boyhood in East Germany", is unfortunately exact; "the East German boyhood of an American" would have been considerably more interesting, as would the occult if Agee had not "played hooky" quite a lot, if he had entertained ambitions within the framework of the system, and if he had been more fully assimilated into the creeds and institutions of the GDR. His perception of East German society is limited by the small extent of his participation in it.

It is greatly to Agee's credit, however, that he never at any stage resorts to faking a social or historical involvement. His book is quite unrelentingly honest in that its best parts are precisely those in which Agee's personal experience comes into contact with the momentous historical events of the time: the death of Stalin, and the awkward gyrations of public figures during his posthumous disgrace; the crisis in Egypt, and the sudden developments in Hungary in 1956 (Agee quotes from a diary he kept at the time, "Yesterday Fascist Terror was still raging in Hungary. Twenty-one men who were keeping watch before the CP building in Budapest were hanged from lamp posts. Communists are being beaten to death, or enriched with gasoline and set on fire. It could happen here!"). The reaction to the prospect of the CDU candidate, Adenauer, being elected as Chancellor in West Germany.

There are some illuminating pages on the advent of rock'n'roll: the purely phonetic enthusiasm of Joel's friends for the lyrics of Chuck Berry; the occasion when one of them goes to a Bill Haley concert in West Berlin and witnesses astonishing scenes - seats flying through the air, floorboards ripped up, the police called in. It is the treatment of subjects like these that gives the reader an impression of time and place that is otherwise lacking. There could have been many more of these.

Apart from these, the sense of historical reality is only to be found in occasional incidents and phrases that strike one as being in some way emblematic. As Agee's approach is unanalytical and non-discursive, these insights are buried in his text: nuggets of an oblique, poetic, accidental truth that the reader must discover for himself. Thus, the least one allegorical monster: "The behemoth chosen like the ran right across the frozen lake to the West, never to be seen again." When Agee describes how he topped a magpie, who was later set on fire by his wild fellows, one thinks almost involuntarily of the author, an ex-

patriate American. Similarly, there are many instances of Agee and his friends misbehaving at school which lead one to speculate on the extremely ambivalent response towards obedience as a positive value taken up by the generation that came after Hitler. These questions are never asked, let alone answered, by Agee, but it says something for his accuracy, and his imagistic skill as an author, that they arise out of his narrative.

In the absence of any extended annotation of East German life, what we are given is a frank, scrupulous and detailed book about growing up. The bathos of adolescence and the lenient, rather maudlin humour of Agee are what emerge most strongly. The German-ness of the whole experience is ending, Musil while a pretentious teenager, identifying with Ulrich; masturbating for the first time in a Viennese hotel; non-cooperation with the FDJ (Free German Youth); being hauled up before his teachers. Every German title and word is translated, robbing the experience associated with it of its residual strangeness, and leaving it with only a pale splash of local colour.

Reading about Agee's youth is like reading about one's own - the details are different, there is less self-censorship and the narrative is very skilful, but it all strikes one as profoundly familiar. It is curious that such a universal and that it should be in what is, in effect, a Continental mode - reminding one of any number of teenage fumbling. One shares Agee's chagrin at finding East Germany still a virgin, but one might say that this was only symbolic of his whole time there. Certainly, when, on the last page, a well-meaning friend says to him, "And with your experience of life in a socialist country, you'll be in a position to become a very fine Marxist indeed", the irony should be seen to hurt not only East Germany but also the youthful Joel Agee.

## Fifty years on: Swinburne and sex

The TLS of June 2, 1932 carried the following review by J. Middleton Murray of Swinburne: A Literary Biography by Georges Lafourcade:

On the wrapper of this admirably balanced and well informed biography it is stated that "Dr Lafourcade writes of Swinburne not the last great poet of traditions, but the forerunner of modernism." Fortunately there is not much trace of this view in his actual narrative. He himself, it is true, speaks in his preface of Swinburne as being "essentially modern", and as being "more akin to Proust, and than Tennyson, Browning, Leconte de Lisle, Zola, Meredith or Hardy." The view is based on the fact that he "refused" to suppress some of the deepest sexual tendencies of his nature.

It is perhaps unfair to quarrel with a view which, as we have said, leaves no perceptible impression on the biographical narrative itself: except for so far as Dr Lafourcade might assert that it does affect his narrative. He himself, it is true, speaks in his preface of Swinburne as being "essentially modern", and as being "more akin to Proust, and than Tennyson, Browning, Leconte de Lisle, Zola, Meredith or Hardy."

His political ideas are out of date; but his sensibility is modern. And by the way in which he embodied his sensibility in perfect works of art, he is the superior of most moderns. . . . The time will come when this much will be recognized as the truth concerning the author of "Lesbia Brando", "A Year's Letters", "Poems and Ballads" and "Solomon's Vision of Love". And it will then be the turn of some of his most recent critics to look old-fashioned.

But the choices of these particular works makes the contention clear: (it involves, we may remark, giving the title of a perfect work of art to "Lesbia Brando") Swinburne, by the fidelity of his expression of the abnormality of his erotic psychology, belongs to the future, not to the past, he is not merely modern, but in advance of modernity. If this be true, we can only reply quite simply that the too full development of modernity is a disease from which we must hope that civilization will somehow escape.

It must be quite unconsciously, and owing to his remarkable veracity as a biographer, that Dr Lafourcade's actual biography is unaffected by this singular critical prepossession. So far indeed from being warped by it, the biography is the best refutation of it. For not only does it give the familiar story of Swinburne's rescue by Theodore Watts without bias but it justly insists on the value of the supreme service done. Dr Lafourcade allows no reader to doubt for a moment that Swinburne was saved by Watts-Dunton, or that he needed to be saved. In his capacity as a veracious biographer, in this and a hundred other ways, Dr Lafourcade confirms the total impression of Swinburne as an altogether astonishing example of arrested development, astonishing in the positive, not the negative sense. And it is quite impossible not to sense an intimate relation between Swinburne's sexual idiosyncrasies, which are prolonged from boyhood, and his failure to become intellectually adult. To say simply that "his political ideas are out of date; but his sensibility is modern" is a strange understatement. His political ideas were childish. He never had any political ideas of his own; and those which he borrowed from time to time were always incoherent.

Not so Swinburne. One can imagine a Swinburne in any century, living essentially the same life, and ending in a way not very different. There is a beautiful and quite disarmingly naive about him. He is, on a magnificent, almost sublime scale, the infant prodigy; and if, as seems very probable, the piece of criticism Dr Lafourcade has unearthed from Mallarmé's review is a criticism of Swinburne by himself, he recognized his own peculiarity as clearly as anyone. "Baudelaire was Catholic, Swinburne is pagan." But "Swinburne is pagan, not like a Greek of the age of Aeschylus, but pagan only as an Englishman of the nineteenth century can be." That adult impossibility was Swinburne.

## Hankering for Hungary

By George Mikes

MONICA PORTER:

The Paper Bridge: A Return to Budapest  
232pp. Quartet. £8.95.  
0 7043 2296 X

Monica Porter was four years old when her parents - Peter Halász, a well-known journalist, and Vali and singer, an even more famous actress - escaped from Hungary after the Revolution of 1956. Her parents moved around quite a bit and she lived in England, the United States, France and West Germany. In the two English-speaking countries she was desperately anxious to become assimilated, to "be like everybody else" and forget about her origins, although occasionally she was pleased to find that being Hungarian was regarded as romantic or even exotic. She became a journalist in London, married and had a son in 1978. After Adam's birth, the gynaecologist asked her if she was Hungarian. She pleaded guilty but enquired how the doctor had guessed. Oh, that was quite simple. The baby had a very dark complexion and - much more important - had a Mongolian Blue Spot on his bottom which appears exclusively on certain male babies born in Hungary. These babies - the gynaecologist added - could be traced back to Genghis Khan.

I personally thought that the dark complexion could be traced back to Monica Porter's father, whom I know well, and that Genghis Khan could safely be left out of it; on the other hand I know nothing about any blue spots on his behind so perhaps some family ties do exist between the Halászes and the Genghis. The Khan did pay a brief visit to Hungary in the thirteenth century.

When the author heard the doctor's strange tale confirmed by other sources, she decided to find out more about her Hungaro-Tartar

origins, and flew to Budapest taking her three-year-old son with her.

First she tried to find out something about the identity of Hungary. Is it a little country in the Carpathian Basin, she asks, or is it part of a bigger continent called emigration, or portable country one can find dispersed in five continents? In Hungary, of course, the place looks more real than from abroad. There, Hungarians are in a majority, not just a few odd specimens with strange accents, striving to achieve something, first of all to cease to be Hungarians (by the way, I am mentioned in the book as a "professional Hungarian"). Monica Porter describes her visit in great detail. She met many relations and friends, old and young, middle-class people and peasants, the contented and rebellious, the athletic and the sick. She had to go to a Communist country to find domestic servants living in, and also a true, old-fashioned snobbish respect for the aristocracy. A taxi-driver told her after a brief journey that he would leave the country as soon as possible because Hungary was too small for him. She went to the theatre, to ballet and the political cabaret, travelled around a bit, visited Lake Balaton, the town of Debrecen and the tiny village of Gölle a lady described Hungary as a nation leaning with one hand on Russia and stretching out the other palm to the West. Perhaps it is Russia which is leaning on Hungary with its full weight.

Be that as it may, what does the author's four week visit amount to? What conclusions did she reach about her origins and about the paper bridge that links her to the country of her birth? She believes that once a refugee always a refugee; it is useless to search for roots. These roots grow inward and you have to accept them as part of yourself. Perhaps after a few more years she will go one step further and believe what many older *émigrés* and expatriates have been driven to believe, namely that the unit of humanity is man, that you are what you are, and that that is your true identity.

## Information, please

[Henry] Christopher Bailey (1878-1961), writer of detective and historical fiction: anecdotes or other information on his detective-fiction writing.

N. E. Talburt.  
Box 1376, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701.

James Fenimore Cooper: facsimiles of literary manuscripts, letters and other materials by or pertaining to him: for a critical biography and a critical edition of his writings.

James Franklin Beard.  
Department of English, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts 01610.

Arthur Didsy (1856-1923), founder of the Japan Society: letters, papers, contact with descendants or dependants of friends sought: for a biography.

John Adlard.  
146 Holland Road, London W14.

Genevieve de Brabant, popular legend: any references in art, literature and science, especially to folk-tales (*Volkstümliche, literäre populäre, Schabracken*), in popular prints (*Bilderbogen, Imagérie populaire*).

Konrad Vanja.  
Im Winkel 6, D-1000 Berlin-West 33.

Shirley Archer's *Ticket for the Shooting of 1676*, half of which is illustrated in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, January-June 1832, p.113; information as to the present whereabouts of the whole ticket, or an illustration of it.

A. A. Holt.  
13 Warren Court, High Cross Road, London N17.

Melior-General Claude Martin (1755-1800), founder of the Martinière schools to Lyons, Lucknow and Calcutta: any information not contained in the lib. by Sanguet

C. Hill, for a biographical study. Kenneth Savidge.  
27 Wellington Park, Belfast 9.

Margaret Cole: documents, photographs, anecdotes or recollections sought; for an authorized biography.

Betty D. Vernon.  
43 The Crescent, Belmont, Sutton, Surrey SM2 6BP.

Douglas Jerrold (1803-1857), author: copies of letters written 1852-57 to Jerrold by Thomas Wakley; will exchange for run of letters from Jerrold to Wakley for the same period; for a biography of Thomas Wakley.

Mary Bostetter.  
18 Downing Court, Grenville Street, London WC1.

Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese: correspondence etc sought, in particular copies of any letters submitted for publication; for an authorized biography.

Kowland Ryder.  
14 North Drive, Edgbaston, Birmingham 5.

Thomas Babington Macaulay: citation of biographical and critical writings, whereabouts of letters, reminiscences, illustrations, published and unpublished manuscripts; for a bibliography of writings about Macaulay.

Randolph Bufano.  
746 17th Avenue, Menlo Park, California 94025.

Studen's Notes from courses in rhetoric, logic, English language and literature, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy from the eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish and English universities: for a study.

Winifred Bryan Hooper.  
Department of English, College of Arts and Science, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri 65211.